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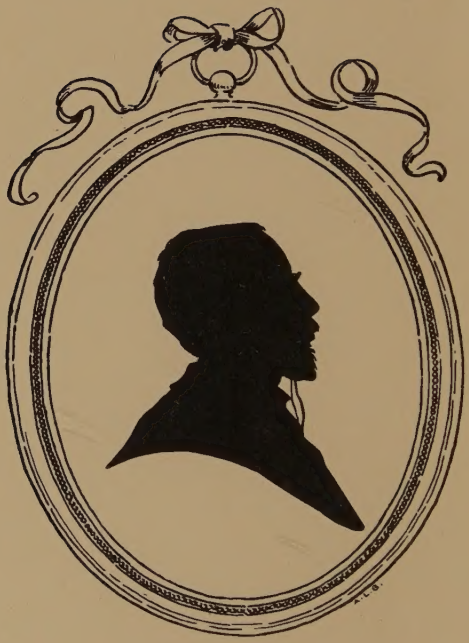

H. C. BUNNER

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The American Short Story Series

VOLUME 6.

GARRETT PRESS

02633760

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 68-55666

This volume was reprinted from the 1894 edition published by Keppler & Schwarzmann
First Garrett Press Edition published 1968

The American Short Story Series
Volume 6
©1968

Manufactured in the United States of America

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GARRETT PRESS, INC.
Publishers
250 West 54th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019

TO

A. L. B.

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THE CUMBERSOME HORSE.

THE CUMBERSOME HORSE.

IT is not to be denied that a sense of disappointment pervaded Mr. Brimmington's being in the hour of his first acquaintance with the isolated farm-house which he had just purchased, sight unseen, after long epistolary negotiations with Mr. Hiram Skinner, postmaster, carpenter, teamster and real estate agent of Bethel Corners, who was now driving him to his new domain.

Perhaps the feeling was of a mixed origin. Indian Summer was much colder up in the Pennsylvania hills than he had expected to find it; and the hills themselves were much larger and bleaker and barer, and far more indifferent in their demeanor toward him, than he had expected to find them. Then Mr. Skinner had been something of a disappointment, himself. He was too familiar with his big, knobby, red hands; too furtive with his small, close-set eyes; too profuse of tobacco-juice, and too raspingly loquacious. And certainly the house itself did not meet his expectations when he first saw it, standing lonely and desolate in its ragged meadows of stubble and wild-grass on the unpleasantly steep mountain-side.

And yet Mr. Skinner had accomplished for him the desire of his heart. He had always said that when he should come into his money — forty thousand dollars from a maiden aunt — he would quit forever his toilsome job of preparing Young Gentlemen for admission to the Larger Colleges and Universities, and would devote the next few years to writing his long-projected "History of Prehistoric Man." And to go about this task he had always said that he would go and live in perfect solitude — that is, all by himself and a chorewoman — in a secluded farm-house, situated upon the southerly slope of some high hill — an old farm-house — a Revolutionary farm-house, if possible — a delightful, long, low, rambling farm-house — a farm-house with floors of various levels — a farm-house with crooked stairs, and with nooks and corners and quaint cupboards — this — this had been the desire of Mr. Brimmington's heart.

Mr. Brimmington, when he came into his money at the age of forty-five, fixed on Pike County, Pennsylvania, as a mountainous country of good report. A postal-guide informed him that Mr. Skinner was the postmaster of Bethel Corners; so, Mr. Brimmington wrote to Mr. Skinner.

The correspondence between Mr. Brimmington and Mr. Skinner was long enough and full enough to have settled a treaty between two nations. It ended by a discovery of a house lonely enough and aged enough to fill the bill. Several hundred dollars' worth of repairs were needed to make it habitable, and Mr. Skinner was employed to make them. Toward the close of a cold November day, Mr. Brimmington saw his purchase for the first time.

In spite of his disappointment, he had to admit, as he walked around the place in the early twilight, that it was just what he had bargained for. The situation, the dimensions, the exposure, were all exactly what had been stipulated. About its age there could be no question. Internally, its irregularity — indeed, its utter failure to conform to any known rules of domestic architecture — surpassed Mr. Brimmington's wildest expectations. It had stairs eighteen inches wide; it had rooms of strange shapes and sizes; it had strange, shallow cupboards in strange places; it had no hallways; its windows were of odd design, and whoso wanted variety in floors could find it there. And along the main wall of Mr. Brimmington's study there ran a structure some three feet and a half high and nearly as deep, which Mr. Skinner confidently assured him was used in old times as a wall-bench or a dresser, indifferently. "You might think," said Mr. Skinner, "that all that space inside there was jest wasted; but it ain't so. Them seats is jest filled up inside with braces so 's that you can set on them good and solid." And then Mr. Skinner proudly called attention to the two coats of gray paint spread over the entire side of

the house, walls, ceilings and woodwork, blending the original portions and the Skinner restorations in one harmonious, homogenous whole.

Mr. Skinner might have told him that this variety of gray paint is highly popular in some rural districts, and is made by mixing lamp-black and ball-blue with a low grade of white lead. But he did not say it; and he drove away as soon as he conveniently could, after formally introducing him to Mrs. Sparhawk, a gaunt, stern-faced, silent, elderly woman. Mrs. Sparhawk was to take charge of his bachelor establishment during the day time. Mrs. Sparhawk cooked him a meal for which she very properly apologized. Then she

returned to her kitchen to "clean up." Mr. Brimmington went to the front door, partly to look out upon his property, and partly to turn his back on the gray paint. There were no steps before the front door, but a newly-graded mound or earthwork about the size of a half-hogshead. He looked out upon his apple-orchard, which was further away than he had expected to find it. It had been out of bearing for ten years, but this Mr. Brimmington did not know. He did know, however, that the whole outlook was distinctly dreary.

As he stood there and gazed out into the twilight, two forms suddenly approached him. Around one corner of the house came Mrs. Sparhawk on her way home. Around the other came an immensely tall, whitish shape, lumbering forward with a heavy tread. Before he knew it, it had scrambled up the side of his mound with a clumsy, ponderous rush, and was thrusting itself directly upon him when he uttered so lusty a cry of dismay that it fell back startled; and, wheeling about a great long body that swayed on four misshapen legs, it pounded off in the direction it had come from, and disappeared around the corner. Mr. Brimmington turned to Mrs. Sparhawk in disquiet and indignation.

"Mrs. Sparhawk," he demanded; "what is that?"

"It 's a horse," said Mrs. Sparhawk, not at all surprised, for she knew that Mr. Brimmington was from the city. "They hitch 'em to wagons here."

"I know it is a horse, Mrs. Sparhawk," Mr. Brimmington rejoined with some asperity;

"but whose horse is it, and what is it doing on my premises?"

"I don't rightly know whose horse it *is*," replied Mrs. Sparhawk; "the man that used to own it, he 's dead now."

"But what," inquired Mr. Brimmington sternly, "is the animal doing here?"

"I guess he b'longs here," Mrs. Sparhawk said. She had a cold, even, impersonal way of speaking, as though she felt that her safest course in life was to confine herself strictly to such statements of fact as might be absolutely required of her.

"But, my good woman," replied Mr. Brim-

mington, in bewilderment, "how can that be? The animal can't certainly belong on my property unless he belongs to me, and that animal certainly is not mine."

Seeing him so much at a loss and so greatly disturbed in mind, Mrs. Sparhawk relented a little from her strict rule of life, and made an attempt at explanation.

"He b'longed to the man who owned this place first off; and I don' know for sure, but I 've heard tell that *he* fixed it some way so 's that the horse would sort of go with the place."

Mr. Brimmington felt irritation rising within him.

"But," he said, "it 's preposterous! There was no such consideration in the deed. No such thing can be done, Mrs. Sparhawk, without my acquiescence!"

"I don't know nothin' about that," said Mrs. Sparhawk; "what I do know is, the place has changed hands often enough since, and the horse has always went with the place."

There was an unsettled suggestion in the first part of this statement of Mrs. Sparhawk that gave a shock to Mr. Brimmington's nerves. He laughed uneasily.

"Oh, er, yes! I see. Very probably there 's been some understanding. I suppose I am to regard the horse as a sort of lien upon the place — a — a — what do they call it? — an incumbrance! Yes," he repeated, more to himself than to Mrs. Sparhawk; "an incumbrance. I 've got a gentleman's country place with a horse incumbrant."

Mrs. Sparhawk heard him, however,

"It *is* a sorter cumbersome horse," she said. And without another word she gathered her shawl about her shoulders, and strode off into the darkness.

Mr. Brimmington turned back into the house, and busied himself with a vain attempt to make his long-cherished furniture look at home in his new leaden-hued rooms. The ungrateful task gave him the blues; and, after an hour of it, he went to bed.

He was dreaming leaden-hued dreams, oppressed, uncomfortable dreams, when a peculiarly weird and uncanny series of thumps on the front of the house awoke him with a start. The thumps might have been made by a giant with a weaver's beam, but he must have been a very drunken giant to group his thumps in such a disorderly parody of time and sequence.

Mr. Brimmington had too guileless and clean a heart to be the prey of undefined terrors. He rose, ran to the window and opened it. The moonlight lit up the raw, frosty landscape with a cold, pale, diffused radiance, and Mr. Brimmington could plainly see right below him the cumbersome horse, cumbersomely trying to maintain a footing on the top of the little mound before the front door. When, for a fleeting instant, he seemed to think that he had succeeded in this feat, he tried to bolt through the door. As soon, however, as one of his huge knees smote the panel, his hind feet lost their grip on the soft earth, and he wabbled back down the incline, where he stood shaking and quivering, until he could muster wind enough for another attempt to make a catapult of himself. The veil-

like illumination of the night, which turned all things else to a dim, silvery gray, could not hide the scars and bruises and worn places that spotted the animal's great, gaunt, distorted frame. His knees were as big as a man's head. His feet were enormous. His joints stood out from his shriveled carcass like so many pine knots. Mr. Brimmington gazed at him, fascinated, horrified, until a rush more desperate and uncertain than the rest threatened to break his front door in.

"Hi!" shrieked Mr. Brimmington; "go away!"

It was the horse's turn to get frightened,

He lifted his long, coffin-shaped head toward Mr. Brimmington's window, cast a sort of blind, cross-eyed, ineffectual glance at him, and with a long-drawn, wheezing, cough-choked whinny he backed down the mound, got himself about, end for end, with such extreme awkwardness that he hurt one poor knee on a hitching-post that looked to be ten feet out of his way, and limped off to the rear of the house.

The sound of that awful, rusty, wind-broken whinny haunted Mr. Brimmington all the rest of that night. It was like the sound of an orchestrion run down, or of a man who is utterly tired of the whooping-cough and does n't care who knows it.

The next morning was bright and sunshiny, and Mr. Brimmington awoke in a more cheerful frame of mind than he would naturally have expected to find himself in after his perturbed night. He found himself inclined to make the best of his purchase and to view it in as favorable a light as possible. He went outside and looked at it from various points of view, trying to find and if possible to dispose of the reason for the vague sense of disappointment which he felt, having come into possession of the rambling old farm-house, which he had so much desired.

He decided, after a long and careful inspection, that it was the *proportions* of the house that were wrong. They were certainly peculiar. It was singularly high between joints in the first story, and singularly low in the second. In spite of its irregularity within, it was uncompromisingly square on the outside. There was something queer about the pitch of its roof, and it

seemed strange that so modest a structure with no hallway whatever should have vestibule windows on each side of its doors, both front and rear.

But here an idea flashed into Mr. Brimmington's mind that in an instant changed him from a carping critic to a delighted discoverer. He was living in a Block House! Yes; that explained — that accounted for all the strangeness of its architecture. In in instant he found his purchase invested with a beautiful glamour of adventurous association. Here was the stout and well-planned refuge to which the grave settlers of an earlier day had fled to guard themselves against the attack of the vindictive red-skins. He saw it all. A moat, crossed no doubt by draw-bridges, had surrounded the building. In the main room below, the women and children had huddled while their courageous defenders had poured a leaden hail upon the foe through loop-holes in the upper story. He walked around the house for some time, looking for loop-holes.

So pleased was Mr. Brimmington at his theory that the morning passed rapidly away, and when he looked at his watch he was surprised to find that it was nearly noon. Then he remembered that Mr. Skinner had promised to call on him at eleven, to make anything right that was not right. Glancing over the landscape he saw Mr. Skinner approaching by a circuitous track. He was apparently following the course of a snake fence which he could readily have climbed. This seemed strange, as his way across the pasture land was seemingly

unimpeded. Thinking of the pasture land made Mr. Brimmington think of the white horse, and casting his eyes a little further down the hill he saw that animal slowly and painfully steering a parallel course to Mr. Skinner, on the other side of the fence. Mr. Skinner went out of sight behind a clump of trees, and when he arrived it was not upon the side of the house where Mr. Brimmington had expected to see him appear.

As they were about to enter the house Mr. Brimmington noticed the marks of last night's attack upon his front door, and he spoke to Mr. Skinner about the horse.

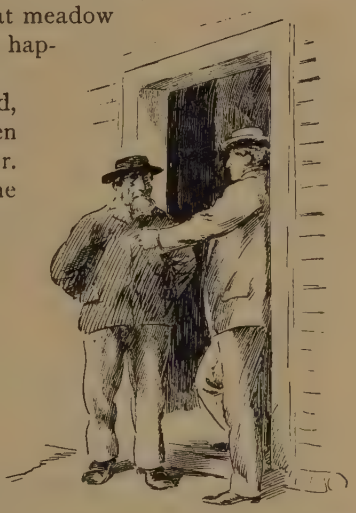
"Oh, yes," said Mr. Skinner, with much ingenuousness; "that horse. I was meaning to speak to you about that horse. Fact is, I 've kinder got that horse on my hands, and if it 's no inconvenience to you, I 'd like to leave him where he is for a little while."

"But it would be very inconvenient, indeed, Mr. Skinner," said the new owner of the house. "The animal is a very unpleasant object; and, moreover, it attempted to break into my front door last night."

Mr. Skinner's face darkened. "Sho!" he said; "you don't mean to tell me that?"

But Mr. Brimmington did mean to tell him that, and Mr. Skinner listened with a scowl of unconcealed perplexity and annoyance. He bit his lip reflectively for a minute or two before he spoke.

"Too bad you was disturbed," he said at length. "You 'll have to keep the bars up to that meadow and then it won't happen again."



"But, indeed, it must not happen again," said Mr. Brimmington; "the horse must be taken away."

"Well, you see it 's this way, friend," returned Mr. Skinner, with a rather ugly air of decision; "I really ain't got no choice in the matter. I 'd like to oblige you, and if I 'd known as far back that you would have objected to the animal I 'd have had him took somewheres. But,

as it is, there ain't no such a thing as getting that there horse off this here place till the frost 's out of the ground. You can see for yourself that that horse, the condition he 's in now, could n't no more go up nor down this hill than he could fly. Why, I came over here a-foot this morning on purpose not to take them horses of mine over this road again. It can't be done, sir."

"Very well," suggested Mr. Brimmington; "kill the horse."

"I ain't killin' no horses," said Mr. Skinner. "You may if you like; but I 'd advise you not to. There 's them as might n't like it."

"Well, let them come and take their horse away, then," said Mr. Brimmington.

"Just so," assented Mr. Skinner. "It 's they who are concerned in the horse, and they have a right to take him away. I would if I was any ways concerned, but I ain't." Here he turned suddenly upon Mr. Brimmington. "Why, look here," he said, "you ain't got the heart to turn that there horse out of that there pasture where he 's been for fifteen years! It won't do you no sorter hurt to have him stay there till Spring. Put the bars up, and he won't trouble you no more."

"But," objected Mr. Brimmington, weakly, "even if the poor creature were not so unsightly, he could not be left alone all Winter in that pasture without shelter."

"That 's just where you 're mistaken," Mr. Skinner replied, tapping his interlocutor heavily upon the shoulder; "he don't mind it not one mite. See that shed there?" And he pointed to a few wind-racked boards in the corner of the

lot. "There 's hoss-shelter; and as for feed, why there 's feed enough in that meadow for two such as him."

In the end, Mr. Brimmington, being utterly ignorant of the nature and needs of horse-flesh, was over-persuaded, and he consented to let the unfortunate white horse remain in his pasture lot to be the sport of the Winter's chill and bitter cruelty. Then he and Mr. Skinner talked about some new paint.

* * * *

It was the dead waist and middle of Mr. Brimmington's third night in his new house, when he was absolutely knocked out of a calm and peaceful slumber by a crash so appalling that he at first thought that the side of the mountain had slid down upon his dwelling. This was followed by other crashes, thumps, the tearing of woodwork and various strange and grewsome noises. Whatever it might be, Mr. Brimmington felt certain that it was no secret midnight marauder, and he hastened to the eighteen-inch stairway without even waiting to put on a dressing-gown. A rush of cold air came up from below, and he had no choice but to scuttle back for a bath-robe and a candle while the noises continued, and the cold air floated all over the house.

There was no difficulty in locating the sounds. Mr. Brimmington presented himself at the door of the little kitchen, pulled it open, and, raising the light above his head, looked in. The rush of wind blew out his light, but not before he had had time to see that it was

the white horse that was in the kitchen, and that he had gone through the floor.

Subsequent investigation proved that the horse had come in through the back door, carrying that and its two vestibule windows with him, and that he had first trampled and then churned the thin floor into match-wood. He was now reposing on his stomach, with his legs hanging down between the joists into the hollow under the house — for there was no cellar. He looked over his shoulder at his host and emitted his blood-curdling wail.

"My Gracious!" said Mr. Brimmington.

That night Mr. Brimmington sat up with the horse, both of them wrapped, as well as Mr. Brimmington could do it, in bed-clothes. There is not much you can do with a horse when you have to sit up with him under such circumstances. The thought crossed Mr. Brimmington's mind of reading to him, but he dismissed it.

* * *

In the interview the next day, between Mr. Brimmington and Mr. Skinner, the aggressiveness was all on Mr. Brimmington's side, and Mr. Skinner was meek and wore an anxious expression. Mr. Brimmington had, however, changed his point of view. He now realized that sleeping out of Winter nights might be unpleasant, even painful to an aged and rheumatic horse. And, although he had cause of legitimate complaint against the creature, he could no longer bear to think of killing the animal with whom he had shared that cold and silent vigil. He commissioned Mr. Skinner to build for the brute a small but commodious lodging, and to provide a proper stock of provender — commissions which Mr. Skinner gladly and humbly accepted. As to the undertaking to get the horse out of his immediate predicament, however, Mr. Skinner absolutely refused to touch the job. "That horse don't like me," said Mr. Skinner; "I know he don't; I seen it in his eyes long ago. If you like, I 'll send you two or three men and a block-and-tackle, and they can get him out; but not me; no, sir!"

Mr. Skinner devoted that day to repairing damages, and promised on the morrow to begin the building of the little barn. Mr. Brimmington was glad there was going to be no greater delay, when, early in the evening, the sociable white horse tried to put his front feet through the study window.

But of all the noises that startled Mr. Brimmington, in the first week of his sojourn in the farm-house, the most alarming awakened him about eight o'clock of the following morning. Hurrying to his study, he gazed in wonder upon a scene unparalleled even in the History of Prehistoric Man. The boards had been ripped off the curious structure which was supposed to have served the hardy settlers for a wall-bench and a dresser, indifferently. This revealed another structure in the form of a long crib or bin, within which, apparently trying to back out through the wall, stood Mr. Skinner, holding his tool-box in front of him as if to shield himself, and fairly yelping with terror. The front door was off its hinges, and there stood Mrs. Sparhawk wielding a broom to keep out the white horse, who was viciously trying to force an entrance. Mr. Brimmington asked what it all meant; and Mrs. Sparhawk, turning a desperate face upon him, spoke with the vigor of a woman who has kept silence too long.

"It means," she said, "that this here house of yours is this here horse's stable; *and the horse knows it;* and that there was the horse's manger. This here horse was old Colonel Josh Pincus's regimental horse, and so provided for in his will; and this here man Skinner was to have the caring

of him until he should die a natural death, and then he was to have this stable; and till then the stable was left to the horse. And now he 's taken the stable away from the horse, and patched it up into a dwelling-house for a fool from New York City; and the horse don't like it; and the horse don't like Skinner. And when he come back to git that manger for your barn, the horse

sot onto him. And that 's what 's the matter, Mr. Skimmerton."

"Mrs. Sparhawk," began Mr. Brimmington—

"I *ain't* no Sparhawk!" fairly shouted the enraged woman, as with a furious shove she sent the Cumbersome Horse staggering down the door-

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way mound; "this here 's Hiram Skinner, the meanest man in Pike County, and I 'm his wife, let out to do day's work! You 've had one week of him—how would you have liked twenty years?"

MR. VINCENT EGG AND THE WAGE OF SIN.

MR. VINCENT EGG AND THE WAGE OF SIN.

R. VINCENT EGG and the daughter of his washerwoman walked out of the front doorway of Mr. Egg's lodging-house into the morning sunlight, with very different expressions upon their two faces.

Mr. Vincent Egg, although he was old and stout and red-nosed and shabby in his attire, wore a look that was at once timorous, fatuous, and weakly mendacious; a look that tried to tell the possible passer-by that his red nose and watery eyes bloomed and blinked in the smiles of Virginie. Virginie, although she was young and pretty and also thin of face and poverty-stricken of garb, wore a look which told you plainly and most honestly beyond a question, that she had no smiles for Mr. Egg or for any one else. They walked down the middle of the street side by side, but *that* they could not very well help doing, for the street was both narrow and dirty, and the edges of the stone gutter down its midway offered the only clean foothold in its entire breadth. As they walked on together, Mr. Egg made a

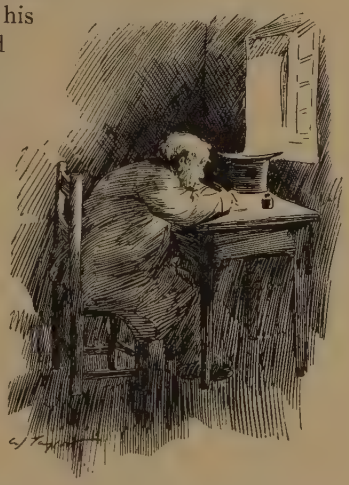
few poor-spirited attempts to start up a gallant conversation with the girl; but she made no response whatever to his remarks, and strode on in dark-faced silence, her empty wash-basket poised between her lank right hip and her thin right elbow. Mr. Egg hemmed and cleared a husky throat, and employed both his unsteady hands in setting his tall, shabby silk hat upon his head in such a manner that its broad brim might keep the sunlight out of his eyes.

Mr. Vincent Egg was in the little city of Drignan on business. His lodgings were in the rue des Quatres Mulets, because they were the cheapest lodgings he could find. There are prettier towns than Drignan, and even in Drignan there are many better streets than the rue des

Quatres Mulets. But it was much the same to Mr. Egg. He took his shabby lodgings, the rebuffs of the fair, the sunlight of other men's fortunes dazzling his weak eyes — all these things he took with an easy indifference of mind so long as life gave him the little he asked of it, namely: a periodic indulgence in alcoholic unconsciousness. A simple drunk, once a month, of at least a week's duration, was what Mr. Egg's soul most craved and desired; but if his fluctuating means made the period of intoxication briefer or the period of sobriety longer, he bore either event with a certain simple heroism. He wanted no "spree," no "toot," no "tear;" a modest spell of sodden, dreamy, tearfully happy soaking in the back-room of some cheap wine-shop where he and his ways were known — this was all that remained of ambition and aspiration in Mr. Egg's life; which had been, for the rest, a long life, a harmless life (except in the stern moralist's sense), and a life that was decidedly a round, complete and total failure in spite of an exceptional allotment of abilities and opportunities. Mr. Egg had been many things in the course of that long and varied life — lawyer, doctor, newspaper-man, speculator, actor, manager, horse-dealer and race-track gamester, croupier (and courier, even, after a fashion) — and heaven knows what else beside, of things avowable and unavowable. Just at present, he was supplying an English firm of Tourist-Excursion Managers with a guide-book of their various routes, at the rate of eighteen-pence per page of small type, and his traveling expenses — third-class. He had just finished "doing up" the district last allotted to him; and,

after two weeks' of traveling about, he had spent another fortnight in writing up his notes in a dingy little lodging-house room in the rue des Quatres Mulets. He knew his ground thoroughly, and that was the cheapest place.

Such was Mr. Vincent Egg, after a half-century of struggle with the world; and something of an imposing figure he made, too, in his defeat and degradation.



His nose was red, his cheeks were puffed and veined, there were bags under his bloodshot eyes, his close-cropped hair was thin, his stubby little gray moustache, desperately waxed at the ends, gave an incongruously foreign touch to his decidedly Anglo-Saxon face—and his clothes were shockingly shabby. But then he *wore* his clothes, as few men in our day can wear clothes; and they were *his* clothes; his very own, and not another's. People often spoke of him, after seeing him once, as "that big, soldierly-looking old man in the white hat." But he did not wear a white hat. His hat, which was one of the largest, one of the jauntiest and one of the oldest ever seen, had also been,

in its time, one of the blackest. It was his coat that gave people an idea of his having something about him that suggested white. It was a tightly-buttoned frock-coat of an indescribable light-dirty color. Most hopelessly shabby men cling to some standard of taste in dress that was *the* standard in their last-remembered days of prosperity. That coat — if it were one coat and not only one of a long-lived family — marked the fact that the last season of prosperity Mr. Egg had enjoyed was a season, now some twenty years gone, when the London "swells" or "nobs," or whatever they called them then, wore frock-coats of certain fashionable light shades of fawn and mouse-color, then known, I believe, as "London Smoke" and "French Gray." While it can not be said that Mr. Egg's coat was familiar in every quarter of Europe (for it rarely staid long enough in any one place), it had certainly been seen in all. And more than one Austrian officer, after passing Mr. Egg in that garment of pallid, dubious and puzzling hue, had turned sharply around to satisfy himself that it was not a uniform-coat in a condition of profanation. A certain state and dignity that still clung to this coat, and the startling cleanness of his well-scissored cuffs and collars were all that remained to give Mr. Egg a hold upon exterior respectability.

With such a history, Mr. Egg was naturally well versed in the freemasonry of poverty and need. As his eyes became accustomed to the sun, he looked at the girl's pinched face, and his tones suddenly changed. Vincent Egg spoke several languages, and he knew all their social

dialects and variations. It was in friendly and familiar speech that he addressed the girl, and asked her — What was the matter? and, Was the business going ill?

If Virginie had been the poor girl you meet with in the stories written by English ladies of a mildly religious turn of mind, she would have dropped a little curtsey and said with a single tear, "Indeed, sir, I had not meant to speak, but you have hit upon the truth. The business goes very ill, indeed, and without help I do not see how my poor mother can survive the Winter." But Virginie, obeying the instincts of her nature and her education, responded to Mr. Egg with a single coarse French adjective which is only to be rendered in English, I am afraid, by the word "stinking."

Mr. Egg was not in the least shocked. He cast his blinking eyes about him at the filthy

roadway, at the narrow old stone houses that crowded both sides of the street with the peaked roofs of their over-hanging upper-stories, almost shutting out the sky above his head, at the countless century-old stains of damp and rust and shameful soilure upon their dull faces, and he said simply:

"Fichu locale!"

Thereby he amply expressed to his hearer his opinion that if the business deserved the adjective she had accorded it, the explanation was to be found in its unfortunate location. This opened the flood gates of Virginie's speech. She told Mr. Egg that he was entirely right about the location, and gave him a few casual corroborative details which showed him that she knew what she was talking about. She also confided to him enough of her family affairs to account for the bitterness of her spirit and her contempt for mirthful dalliance. It was nothing but the old endless story of poverty in one of its innumerable variants. This time the father, a jobbing stone-mason, had not only broken his leg in Marseilles, but on coming out of the hospital had got drunk, assaulted a gend'arme, made a compound fracture of it, and laid himself up for several months. This time the mother had a rheumatic swelling of one arm, which hindered her in her washing. This time the eldest boy had got himself into some trouble in trying to evade the performance of his term of military duty. This time the youngest child had some torturing disease of the spine that necessitated — or rather needed — an operation. And, of course, as at all times, there were five

or six hungry mouths, associated with as many pairs of comparatively helpless hands, between Virginie and that youngest. And as to business, that was certainly bad. It was particularly bad of late — although it was always bad

in Drignan. Virginie told Mr. Egg that he was "rudement propre," or "blazing clean" — clean as they were not in Drignan, she assured him. In fact, it appeared, this strange English gentleman, who had paid as high as a franc-and-a-half a week for his washing, had been accepted by Virginie's family as designed in the mercy of Divine Providence to tide them over their period of distress. His departure at the end of two weeks was a sore disappointment in a financial point of view.

Vincent Egg was a very kind-hearted man, and he listened to this recital, and uttered sympathetic ejaculations in the right places. He was

sorry about the youngest child, very sorry; he had known a case like it. Perhaps, he suggested, business might pick up. Messrs. Sculry & Co., the great English managers of Tourists' Excursions, were going to make Drignan a stopping-place for their excursions on the way to Avignon. It was going to be a stopping-place of only a few hours, but, perhaps, it might bring some business. Who knew? Virginie brightened up when she heard this, and said that was so. Those English, she remarked, were always washing — no disrespect intended to the gentleman.

"And here," she said, as they came abreast of a narrow gateway on the other side of the street from Mr. Egg's lodging-house, "is where I live. It is on the ground floor. Will Monsieur come in and see the baby?" And her eyes lit up for the first time with a real interest — the interest, half-proud, and half-morbid, of a poor, simple creature who longs to exhibit to the world the affliction of monstrosity which sets her poor household apart from others of its kind.

Now, Mr. Egg had not the slightest desire to see the baby, and he had no intention whatever of going in; but, glancing through the narrow doorway, he saw a succession of arches in the courtyard beyond, and some old bits of mediæval masonry, which excited his curiosity. If this were the remains of some old monastery that had escaped his notice, it might mean a half-page more — nine-pence — in his guide-book. He strolled in by Virginie's side, heedless of her chatter. No; it was not the ruin

of an ecclesiastical structure. The courtyard was only a part of an old stable and blacksmith-shop; old, but no older probably than the rest of that old street, which might have been standing at the time of Louis XIV — though it probably was n't. From its proximity to a canal that marked the line of an old moat, Mr. Egg made a safe guess that it was a small remnant of the stables and farriery attached to

the barracks of the original fortifications of the town.

At any rate, it was no fish for the net of Messrs. Sculry & Co.'s guide-book compiler; and he was turning to go, when Virginie, who had supposed that he was merely following in her lead, to feast his eyes upon the sick baby, said simply, as she pushed open a door, "This way, Monsieur," and, before he knew it, he had entered his washerwoman's room.

Although it was a ground-floor room, damp, dark and old, it was clean with a curious sort of cleanness that seems to belong to the Latin races — a cleanness that gives one the impression of having been achieved without the use of soap and water: as if everything had been scraped clean instead of being washed clean. Virginie's mother was clean, too, in spite of her swollen and helpless arm, and the three or four children who were playing on the stone floor were no dirtier than healthy children ought to be between washes. But Mr. Egg had hardly had time to take more than cursory note of these facts before his attention was riveted by the sick child in the French woman's arms — so pitiful a little piece of suffering childhood that a much harder-hearted man than Mr. Vincent Egg might readily have been shocked at the sight of it. As for Mr. Egg, he simply dropped into a seated posture upon a convenient bench, and stared in the fascination of pity and horror.

Mr. Egg knew little of children and less of their diseases. In the ordinary course of things, such matters were not often brought to his attention; and, to tell the truth, had he known what

he was to see there, no persuasion would have induced him to enter that poor little room. Now that he did see it, however, he could not move his eyes: the spectacle had for him a hideous attraction of novelty. Virginie and her mother exhibited the poor little misshapen thing, and rattled over the history of the case with a volubility which showed that it was no new tale. For fifteen minutes their visitor sat and stared in horrified silence; and, when at last he made his way back to the street, he found that his mind was in a more disturbed state than he had known it to be in many years.

It is the people who most avoid the sight of human suffering who very often are the most sharply shocked by it when that sight is obtruded upon them. Your professional nurse soon

learns to succor without lamentation: it is the person who "really has no faculty for nursing" who goes into spasms of sensibility over the sight of a finger caught in a cog-wheel, and runs about clamoring for new laws for the suppression of all machinery not constructed of India-rubber. Up to half an hour before, Mr. Egg had never wasted many thoughts upon the millions of suffering babies in this world; and now he could not turn his thoughts to anything except the particular baby that he had just seen.

And yet, as he had told Virginie, he had known of a similar case before, though it belonged to a time so long ago that it had practically faded from his mind. It was the case of his own brother, who had died in infancy of some such trouble, one of the earliest victims of an operation at that time in its earliest experimental stages. That was more than half a century ago, and Vincent Egg had no remembrance whatever of the little brother. But he did remember his first childish impression of a visit to the hospital where the little one lay—of the smell of the disinfectants and the chill of the whitewashed walls.

The heart of Mr. Egg was touched, and he felt himself moved with a strong desire to extend some help to these people who were so much worse off than he was. Yet Mr. Egg's intellectual parts told him that there was no possibility of his doing anything of the sort. He knew, beyond any chance of fond delusion, his present position and his future prospects. He had his ticket back to Lyons, where the local branch of Messrs. Sculry & Co. had its office;

he had in his valise at his lodgings just enough money for his necessary sustenance upon his journey. And not one other penny, not one soumarkee would he have until, at Messrs. Sculry & Co.'s office, his work had been measured down to the last syllable, and he had received therefor as many times eighteen-pence as he had produced pages. That would be, it was true, quite a neat little sum, but—and here came in the big BUT of Mr. Egg's existence.

For Mr. Egg knew exactly what was going to become of that money. To draw it at all, he would have to present himself at the office in a condition of sobriety, which would be the last effort of a period of abstinence that he was beginning to find very trying. Then, so much of it must go to buying himself back into the three or four attenuated credits by grace of which he lived his poor life at Lyons; and just enough would be left to give him that fortnight of drunken stupor for which he had worked so long and so hard.

Mr. Egg needed an effort rather of the memory than of the imagination to forecast the recurrence of that familiar stupor. He could see himself leaving the spick-and-span, highly respectable office of the Lyons agency of Messrs. Sculry & Co., and hurrying off upon the few bits of business that must be attended to before he could present himself at "his" wine-shop, which was a very dirty one, indeed, kept by a certain M. and Mme. Louis Morel, in an appro-

priately unclean back street. There he knew just what to expect in the way of noisy, ready-handed, false-faced welcome. Then would come the tantalizingly-prolonged bargaining over the score to be settled and the score to be begun, and at last he would be free to take possession of that dark, ill-ventilated little back room which was always reserved for the periodical retirements of this regular patron of the house. It was a little room like a ship's stateroom, hardly large enough to contain its dirty red velvet divan, its round table and its two chairs; yet for a week or a fortnight it would be his, and behind it, in the hallway, was a bed on which he could stretch himself in the hours when he felt the need of deeper slumber than the hard cushions of the divan permitted. There his few friends, outcasts and adventurers like himself, would drop in to see him, one or two at a time, to help him on his murky way with challenges to bouts of brandy-drinking, in which he would always pay for two glasses to the other man's one. Then, as the procession of callers went on, it would grow dim and dimmer and vague and yet more vague, until it was lost in a hazy, wavering dream, wherein familiar faces of men and women stared at him from out of days so long gone by that in his dream he could fancy them happy.

That was what lay before him. Mr. Vincent Egg knew it as well as he knew that the calendar months would go on in their regular order, and the tides in the sea would continue to rise and fall. Under these circumstances, nothing was more certain than that the unfortu-

nate family of Mr. Egg's washerwoman need look for no help whatever from Mr. Egg's prospective earnings. "It 's a damned shame!" said Mr. Egg to himself, slapping his thigh. And it was a shame. But there it was.

Suddenly a great thought struck Mr. Egg — a thought so great and so forcible in the blow that it dealt his mental apprehension that for three minutes he stood stock-still in the gutter in the middle of the rue des Quatre Mulets. Then somebody poured a pail of water out of a door-way and drowned him out, but he went on his way, quite indifferent to wet feet.

Mr. Vincent Egg went to his lodgings, and there extracted from his valise the very small sum of money which he had laid aside for his necessary sustenance on his trip to Lyons. This he took to a sign-painter on the outskirts of Drignan, to whom he paid the whole of it for

the execution of a small but conspicuous sign-board, which he carried away with him under his arm.

* * *

The usual afternoon wind was blowing in Drignan, chill and raw, with a depressing flavor of a spoilt ocean about it. The sky was overcast, and everything was dismal in the dismal little town. Dismalest of all, perhaps, was a wretched little corner of waste land, between the old barrack-wall and the dirty canal behind it. A few sick, stunted, faded olive and orange trees in the lee of a mean stone wall showed that the place had at one time been a garden or court-yard. Heaps of rubbish here and there showed also that it had long outlived its usefulness. Here sat, one on each side of a tiny fire of twigs, a shabby, soldierly-looking old gentleman and a sallow, lanky young girl with a sullenly pretty face. Right in the sluggish smoke of the fire, the old man held a small sign-board still fresh from the painter's hand, and the more the smoke took the brightness out of the new colors, the more he gazed at it with thoughtful approval. The girl said nothing; but sat and stared at the fire and listened with an air of weary and indifferent toleration while the old man repeated over and over what sounded like a monotonous narrative recitation. From time to time she nodded her head; and, at last, she began to repeat after the old man in a listless, mechanical way. It was late in the afternoon before they rose and scrambled over the heaps of rubbish to the street, where the old gentle-

man bade the girl good-by with what were evidently words of earnest admonition. His iteration seemed to annoy her, for finally she let slip, in a tone of anger, a specimen of the speech of the people which was n't exactly this; though at this we will let it go:

"Vous savez, mons vieux, je m'en fiche bien de votre Pé — Pé — Pétrarque — et de votre Laure aussi —"

Then she as quickly dropped back into her natural tone of hopeless submission to all who were less wretched than herself, and said, with something like gratitude in her voice:

"All the same, it is very kind of you, sir. I will try to do as you have told me."

And they parted, she entering a near-by passage-way, and he going to the railroad station.

* * *

Mr. Vincent Egg stood in the private office of the Lyons branch of Messrs. Sculry & Co., the great Excursion Managers. He was, for him, unusually smart as to his clothes — to those who knew him, a sign that he had reached the end of his period of abstinence. The Manager of the Branch, a thin, raw, red-faced little Englishman with sandy whiskers, was looking over the proofs of the guide-book pages set up from Mr. Egg's copy.

"Oh, ah, yes, Egg!" he said; "I knew there was something particular I wanted to speak to you about. Here it is." And he slowly read aloud:

"Another and perhaps the principal attraction of Drignan is the ruin, pathetic in its dignity, of the mansion of the Conte dei Canale, the exiled Venetian, where the immortal poet Petrarch and the no less immortal lady of his love, whom he has celebrated in undying verse, met secretly, in the year 1337, to bid each other a long and chaste farewell. News of the lovers' design having reached the ears of de Sade, the husband of the beauteous Laura, his base mind suspected an elopement, and he dispatched his liveried minions to separate the pair, and, if possible, to immolate on the altar of his vengeance the gentle and talented poet. It is supposed to be in consequence of injuries received in the resultant

struggle that Petrarch went into retirement for three years at Vaucluse (a spot which no holder of Messrs. Sculry & Co.'s 7-9 extra-trip coupon should fail to see). This exquisite chapter in the lives of the lovers over whom so many tears of sentiment have been shed, has been strangely neglected by the historians; but survives undimmed in local tradition. A full account will be found on page 329. The house is now 47 *bis* rue des Quatres Mulets. Behind it may still be seen what remains of the magnificent orangery and olive-garden of the Conte dei Canale. Access to this is gained from the second gateway from the corner of the Passage des Porcs, and should not be confounded with the entrance to the Jardin de Perse, a resort of somewhat frivolous

character, situated on the second crossing below, rue Clément V."—

Here the Manager raised his head. "I suppose that 's for the men?"

"Yes," said Mr. Egg; "that 's for the men."

"Well," said the Manager, "what about this other attraction, this Petrarch and Laura place?"

"Well," said Mr. Egg, blinking at him, for it was still early in the morning; "there it is, as large as life, with a sign on the door that looks as if it had been there fifty years; and I 'll give it to you as my opinion that if you don't work that attraction, the Novelty Excursion Company will jump in and work it for you."

"Ay, ay!" said the Manager, irritably; "that 's all very well; but how about the fees? That excursion goes by way of Drignan to save money. The London office won't thank me if I give them any extra fees to pay."

"Oh!" said Mr. Egg, pleasantly; "is that all? Here, give me that proof." And, taking the sheets from the manager, he wrote as follows, on the margin:

"The mansion is at present owned by a respectable family who also do trustworthy washing. A polite, well-informed attendant is always ready to show the premises on payment of a moderate fee of 35 centimes, (3½ d.) Although no part of the regular excursion, the liberal time allowed by Messrs. Sculry & Co., for rest and refreshment in Drignan, will enable excursionists to visit this shrine of deathless romance."

The Manager took the amended proof back, and read it admiringly.

"By Jove, Egg!" he said; "that does it to the Queen's taste! An attraction like that, and not a penny's expense to the concern! I suppose, of course, really and truly, it 's all Tommy-rot?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Egg, pleasantly.

"Never was any such business, I suppose," went on the Manager.

"I don't believe it, myself," said Mr. Egg, shaking his head sagely.

"Well," said the Manager, "it 's all right for business, so far as the Avignon tour is concerned. And, oh! I say, Egg, I don't suppose you *could* keep permanently straight, could you?"

"At my time of life," said Mr. Egg, blandly, "a gentleman's habits are apt to be fixed."

"I suppose so," sighed the Manager. "Well, all the same, the London office was very much pleased with the last job you did, Egg, and they have authorized me, at my discretion, to increase your honorarium. We 'll make it a shilling a page, beginning with the present."

When Mr. Vincent Egg reached the street, he looked at the unexpected pile of wealth in his hand.

"This is a three weeks' go at elysium,"

said he to himself; "such as I have n't had in many a year. And, so far as I am concerned, it is the Fruit of Falsification, and the Wage of Sin."

But when Mr. Egg next awoke from his period of slumber in M. Morel's back-room, and stretched himself upon the hard cushion of the red velvet divan, throngs of gawking tourists were trying to steep themselves in sentiment as they gazed about the old room off the rue des Quatres Mulets, and looked over the wall at the faded orange and olive trees, and listened to the story which Virginie told, like a talking-doll, and dropped into her hand a welcome stream of copper or silver, according as they were English or Americans.

THE GHOOLLAH.

THE GHOOLLAH.

I TOOK a long drive one day last Summer to see an old friend of mine who was in singularly hard luck; and I found him in even harder luck and more singular than I had expected. My drive took me to a spot a few miles back of a Southern sea-coast, where, in a cup-like hollow of the low, rocky hills, treeless save for stunted and distorted firs and pines, six or eight score of perspiring laborers, attired in low-necked costumes consisting exclusively of a pair of linen trousers a-piece, toil all day in the blazing sun to dig out some kind of clay of which I know nothing, except that it looks mean, smells worse, has a name ending in *ite*, and is of great value in the arts and sciences. They may make fertilizer out of it, or they may make water-colors: Billings told me, but I don't know. There are some things that one forgets almost as readily as a blow to one's pride. Moreover, this stuff was associated in my mind with Big Mitch.

Of course Billings was making a fortune out of it. But as it would take six or eight years to touch the figure he had set for himself, and as he had no special guarantee of an immortal youth on this earth, and as, until the fortune

was made, he had to live all the year around in that god-forsaken spot, and to live with Big Mitch, moreover, I looked upon him as a man in uncommonly hard luck. And he was.

I had been visiting friends in a town some miles inland, and it had occurred to me that it would be an act of Christian charity to drive over the hills to Billings's place of servitude, and to condole with my old friend. I had nothing else to do — a circumstance always favorable to the perpetration of acts of Christian charity — and I went. He was enthusiastically glad to see me — I was the first visitor

he had ever had — and he left his office at once, and led me up the burning hot sand-hill to his house, which was a very comfortable sort of place when you got there. It was an old-fashioned Southern house, small but stately, with a Grecian portico in front, supported by two-

story wooden pillars. Here he was established in lonely luxury, with no one to love, none to caress, swarms of darkeys, and a cellar full of wines that would have tempted the Dying Anchorite to swill. Casually dispatching half a dozen niggers after as many bottles of champagne as they thought we might need to whet our appetites for luncheon, Billings bade me welcome again, and we fell to friendly talk.

He began with that kind of apology for his condition that speaks its own futility, and its despair of any credence. Of course, he said, it was not a very cheerful sort of life, but it had its compensations — quiet, good for the nerves, opportunity for study and all that sort of thing, self-improvement. And then, of course, there was society, such as it was — mainly, he had to admit, the superannuated bachelors and worn-out old maids who clung to those decaying Southern plantations — for, it is hardly necessary to say, not an acre of property in that forlorn region, save only Billings's mud-bank, had yielded a cent of revenue since the war. And, of course, the unpleasant part of it was that none of them lived less than ten or fifteen miles away, and were only to be reached by a long ride, and as he — Billings — was never at ease in the saddle, on account of his liver, this practically shut him out. But then, of course, Mitch went everywhere, and enjoyed it very much.

"Oh, yes!" said I, reminded of the most unpleasant part of my duty; "and how is Mitch?"

"He 's dirty well, and it 's devilish little you care!" brayed out an incredibly brazen

voice just behind my ear, and a big red hand snatched the bottle of champagne from my grasp, while a laugh, that sounded like a hyena trying to bellow, rang in my ears. A great, big, raw-boned youngster, dressed in clothes of an ingenious vulgarity, dropped heavily into a chair by my side and laid a knobby broad red hand on my knee, where it closed with a brutal grip. That was Big Mitch, whose real name was Randolph Mitchel, and who being by birth a

distant connection of dear old Billings, might reasonably have been expected to be some sort or variety of gentleman. Yet, if you wanted to sum up Big Mitch, his ways, manners, tastes, ideas and spiritual make-up generally, — if he could be said to have any spiritual make-up — you had only to say that he was all that a

gentleman is not, and you had a better descriptive characterization of the man than you could have got in a volume telling just what he was. This was not by any means my first acquaintance with Mr. Randolph Mitchel. When I was a young man his father had stood my friend, and though he had dropped out of my sight when he went, a hopeless consumptive, to vegetate in some Western sanitarium, it was natural enough that he should send to me to use my good offices in behalf of his son, who had been expelled from a well-known fresh-water college of the Atlantic slope, very shortly after he had entered it.

Now I am not a hard-hearted man, and a boy with a reasonable, rational, normal amount of devil in him can do pretty nearly anything he wants to with me; therefore it signifies something when I say that after giving up a week to the business, I had to write to poor old Mr. Mitchel, at the Consumptives' Home, Bilhi, Colorado, not only that was it impossible to get his son Randolph reinstated at that particular college, but that I did not believe that there was any college ever made where the boy had a prospect of staying even one term out. It was not that he was vicious; he was no worse on the purely moral side than scores of wild boys. But he was the most hopelessly, irreclaimably turbulent, riotous, unruly, insolent, brutal, irreverent, unmannerly and generally blackguardly young devil that I had ever encountered; and the entire faculty of the college said, in their own scholastic way, that he beat *their* time. He had not even the saving graces

of good-nature, thoughtlessness and mirthful good-fellowship, which may serve as excuse for much youthful waywardness. The students disliked him as thoroughly as their professors did, and although he was smart as a steel trap and capable of any amount of work when he wanted to do it, nobody in that college wanted him,—*not even the captain of the foot-ball team.*

Was I right? Had I wronged the boy? I asked that captain, and he said No.

Big Mitch was only twenty-three or so, but he had been many things in his young life. He had run away and traveled with a circus. He had been a helper in a racing stable. I don't know what he was when his father made a last desperate appeal to poor Billings, and Billings, who did not know what he was letting himself in for, sent him down to start up work on the recently purchased mud-pit. There Mitch found his billet, and he led a life of absolute happiness, domineering over a horde of helpless, ignorant negros, and white men of an even lower grade who sought work in that wretched place. And what a life he led the dear, gentle, kindly old fellow who had sold himself to fortune-getting in that little Inferno! I knew how Billings must loathe him; I knew, indeed, how he did loathe him, though he was too gentle to say it, but I knew that the burden my poor old friend had put upon himself would not soon be shifted. For Big Mitch was useful, nay, indispensable, for the first time in his life. He was as honest as he was tough, and he could handle that low grade of human material as few others could have done. The speculation would have been a failure

without him. "In fact," Billings told me afterward with a sad smile, "it is not only that he raises the efficient of the works; he *is* the efficient of the works."

Big Mitch never bore me the slightest ill-will for the report I had made to his father. He was too indurated an Ishmael for that. He knew everybody disliked him, but he did not care a cent for that. When he wanted other people's company, he *took* it. The question of their enjoyment was one that never entered his mind. It was in pure delight in seeing me that he grabbed my knee, pinched my knee-

cap until it sent a qualm to my stomach, and told me that he had ordered my driver to go home, and that I had got to stay and see the country. Things came pretty near to a lively squall when I got the impudence of this through my head; but when Billings joined his frightened, anxious pleadings to the youth's brutalities, and I saw his humbled, troubled, mortified face, I yielded.

We were free from Mitch after luncheon, and poor Billings began to make a pitiful little apology; but I stopped him.

"I don't mind," I said; "I was only thinking of *you*."

"Oh, I 've got accustomed to it," he said, trying to smile; "and it 's really more tolerable than you would think, when you get to know him. And when he is too — too trying — why, there is one place that he understands he must respect. Come to my library. You are the first person who has ever entered it except myself."

He led me to the door of a room at the end of a dark passage-way. As he put the key in the lock I noticed a curious smell.

"I want you to see," said he, "the sort of thing I 'm interested in."

I had not been five seconds in the room before I knew what it was — the sort of thing he was interested in. Loneliness breeds strange maggots in the brain of a New Yorker temporarily engaged in the mud-mining business. My old friend Billings was now a full-blown Theosophist, and he had that little room stuffed full of more Mahatma-literature and faquir trumpery than you could shake a stick at. There

were skulls and fans and grass-cloth things and heathen gods till — literally — your eyes could n't rest. There were four-legged gods and eight-legged gods, and gods with their legs where their arms ought to be, and gods who were of the gentleman-god and lady-god sex at one and the same time, and gods with horns and miscellaneous gods, and a few other gods. In odd places here and there, where he had not had time to arrange them properly, there were a few more gods.

And then my poor old friend sat down and tried to put me through the whole business, and tell me what a great and mysterious thing it was, and what a splendid scheme it would be to get into the two-hundred and ninety-seventh state

or the thirtieth dilution or the thirty-third degree, or something, for when you got there you were nothing, don't you know?

I was short on Vishnu and I did n't know beans about Buddha, and for a long time, I am afraid, I gave dear old Billings a great deal of grief. But finally I began to get a new light, and Billings convinced me that there was something in it, and we had some more champagne.

That evening Mitch came for us with a carryall, and said he was going to drive us twenty miles inland to a "dancing-in-the-barn" function on somebody's plantation. I proved to him then and there that he was not. Billings nearly melted into a puddle while the operation was going on. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw Big Mitch drive off alone, and I think he had a slight chill. At any rate, he had the champagne brought to the library, and there he told me that he had not believed such a thing to be possible; that he looked upon me in a new light, and that he thought my *Ghoollah* must be stronger than Mitch's *Ghoollah*. I told him that I should be ashamed of myself if it was n't; and then I asked him what a *Ghoollah* was. Please do not ask me if I have spelled that word right. I am spelling it by ear, and if my ear for Hindoo is as bad as my ear for music, I have probably got it wrong. It sounded something like the noise that pigeons make, and that is as near as I can get to it. According to Billings, it was Hindoo for my vital essence and my will power and my conscience and my immortal soul and pretty nearly every other spiritual property that I carried

around in my clothes. Everyone, it appeared, had a *Ghoollah*. If your Ghoollah was stronger than the other man's Ghoollah, you bossed the other man. If you had a good and happy Ghoollah, you were good and happy. If you had a bad Ghoollah, you were bilious. If my Theosophy is wrong, please do not correct it.

I prefer it wrong. I told him that I did not see that having a Ghoollah was anything more than being yourself, but he said it was; that folks could swap Ghoollahs, or lend them out on call loans.

Then it all came out. That was the reason that he was driving deeper and deeper into Theosophy. He had got so sick of Mitch that,

feeling it impossible to shake off his burden, he had seized upon this Ghoollah idea as offering a ray of hope. He was now trying to learn how to get into spiritual communication with somebody — *anybody* — else, who would swap Ghoollahs with him after business hours, so that they could ride-and-tie, as it were, and give his own weary Ghoollah a rest.

"Look here, Billings," I said, "this is all rubbish. Now, I 'm not dealing in Ghoollahs, but I 'll tell you what I 'll do. You can find some sort of a job here for a decent young fellow, and I 'll send one down who 'll be grateful for the place and who will be a companion to you. It 's Arthur Penrhyn, Dr. Penrhyn's boy; a nice, pleasant young fellow — just what his father used to be, you remember? He was to have graduated at Union this year, but he broke down from over-study. That 's the kind of Ghoollah *you* want, and he 'll do you no end of good."

* * *

This happened in June. I had never expected to see Billings's mud-heap again, but I saw it before the end of July. I went there because Billings had written me that if I cared for him and our life-long friendship, and for poor Penrhyn's boy I must come at once. He could not explain by letter what the matter was.

It added to my natural concern when, on my arrival, Billings hurried me into the library and I found it as theosophic as ever. I had hoped that that nonsense was ended. But worse was to come.

"When you were here before," said Billings, impressively, without having once mentioned champagne, "you scoffed at a light which you could n't see. Now, my friend, I am going to let you see it with your own eyes, and you shall tell me whether or no you are convinced that it is possible for one human being to exchange his entity with another. If I have brought you here on a wild goose chase, I am willing to have you procure a judicial examination into my sanity, and I will abide the issue."

He spoke with so much quiet gravity that he made me feel creepy.

"See here, old man," I said; "do you mean to tell me that you have succeeded in pairing off with any other fellow's Ghoollah, or Woollah, or whatever it is?"

"No," he said, coloring a little; "it 's not I. It 's — it 's — it 's — in fact, it 's that boy Penrhyn."

"What the deuce do you mean?" I demanded.

"I mean that Arthur Penrhyn has changed, or, rather, is changing his spiritual essence with another man."

"Indeed," said I; "and who 's the other man?"

"Randolph Mitchel," said Billings.

"Mitch?"

"Mitch!"

There is no need of describing the rest of that interview. You have probably met the man who believes that the spirit of his grandmother came out of the cabinet and shook hands with him. You can probably imagine how you would talk to that man if he had brought you eight hundred miles to tell you about it. That is what happened in Billings's library that afternoon, and it ended, of course, in our calling each other "old man" a great many times over, and in my agreeing to stay to the end of the week, and in Billings giving me his word of honor not to open his mouth on the subject unless at the end of that time I asked him to and admitted that he was right in sending for me. And then Billings did something that knocked my consciousness of superiority clean out of me, and gave a severe shock to my confidence. He offered to bet me five hundred dollars to anything that would make it interesting on that contingency, and he called me down and down till I had to compromise on a bet of fifty dollars even. I have met many men in the course of my life who believed in various spook-religions, but that was the first and only time that I ever met a man who would back his faith with a cold money bet.

* * *

By way of changing the subject, we strolled down to the quarry. It was even hotter than before, and it smelt worse, and I did not wonder that it had driven poor old Billings to Theosophy. It was a scene of interesting activity, but it could

not be called pleasant. I have a great respect for the dignity of labor, but I think labor looks more dignified with its shirt on than when reduced to a lone pair of breeches.

I was about to make a motion to return to the house, when suddenly a string of peculiarly offensive oaths, uttered in a shrill angry voice, drew my attention to a heavy wire rope which a gang of men were hauling across my path. Looking up I saw, as well as I could see anything, against the dazzling background of the hill, a short, insignificant-looking figure perched on a rock, from whence it directed, with many gesticulations and an abounding stream of profanity, the operations of the toiling, grunting, straining creatures who dragged at the ponderous cable. Its operations seemed to be conducted with more vehemence than judgement, and two or three times the rope was on the edge of slipping back into the pit behind, when it was saved by the men's quick response to some directions given in a low, strong voice by a man who stood in my rear. Some little hitch occurred after a minute or two, and the small figure, in an access of rage, rushed down from the rock, and, showering imprecations all around, leaped in among the workmen, pushing, shoving and cuffing, and after considerable trouble finally got them to doing what he wanted. I heard the heavier voice behind me utter half-aloud an expression of annoyance and disgust. Then the little figure passed me, running back to its rock, and hailed me as it passed.

"Hello, Governor!" it said; "you here? See you when I get this job done!"

"Billings," said I, "who on earth is that?"

"Arthur Penrhyn," said Billings. I looked again and saw that it was. Then I turned round and saw behind me the gigantic form of Mitch. He, too, spoke to me as I passed, and with a look of simple pleasure in his face that made it seem absolutely strange to me.

"Glad to see you, Sir," he said.

Sir!

* * *

"It 's a most remarkable case altogether," said Billings, who had got back to his normal self, and had brought out the champagne. "When that boy came here he was just as you described him — just like his poor father in the days when we first knew each other. He brooded a little too much, and seemed dis-

contented; but, considering his disappointment at college, that was natural enough. Well, do you know, I believe it 's he that 's doing the whole thing, and that he is effecting the substitution for his own ends, though I don't know what they are."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "he wants his Ghoollah to get the job away from Mitch's Ghoollah."

"Ahem!" said Billings, looking a little embarrassed; "I — in fact, I 've discovered that the best Pundits do not use that word. It ought to be —"

Here Billings gave me the correct word; but I draw the line at Ghoollah, and Ghoollah it stays while I am telling this story.

"He had n't been here a week before I noticed that he kept his eyes fixed on Mitch all the time they were together. He looked at him as though he were actually trying to absorb him. Before long, I saw that Mitch began to be troubled under that steady gaze. He seemed at first angry, then distressed, and he had long fits of silence. His boisterousness has been vanishing steadily; but it is not sullenness that he displays — on the contrary, I have never known him so gentle. He is just as efficient in his duties, without being so extremely — demonstrative as he used to be. And as for that other boy, who probably had never uttered a profane word in his life, or spoken rudely to any human being — well, you heard him to-day!"

I made up my mind to try to drink fifty dollars' worth of Billings's champagne before the end of the week to even up on my bet; and,

as the days went on, each new development only served to urge me to greater assiduity in the task. The spirit of Big Mitch looked out of little Arthur Penrhyn's insolent eyes, spoke out of his foul mouth, and showed itself even in tricks of gesture and carriage, and in lines of facial expression. And Big Mitch, though his huge, uncouth frame and coarse lineaments lent themselves but ill to the showing of it, carried within him a new spirit of gentleness and humility. We saw little of him, for after work hours he kept persistently to his room. But once, late at night, seeing him, through his open door, asleep over a book, I stepped softly in and looked over his big shoulders at the half-dozen volumes that littered his table. They were college text-books, and on the fly-leaf of each one was the name of Arthur Penryhn.

* * *

I had packed my valise, and was looking for Billings to pay him his fifty dollars, when Big Mitch came out of his room — it was the noon hour — and he asked me for the favor of a few words.

"I am ashamed to trouble you, sir," he said, "but if you could help me to get any sort of a job in New York, or anywhere else, I 'd be more thankful than I could tell you. I can afford to take almost any sort of a place where there 's a future, for I am pretty well ahead of the game financially, and I 've earned my interest in this concern. And it 's in such shape now that Mr. Billings can get along without me."

"But, my dear boy," I said, "why do you *want* to go?"

Big Mitch frowned and fidgeted nervously; then he exploded.

"I 'll give it to you straight," he said. "It 's that Penrhyn pup. When he first came here I thought I was just about the nicest little man on God's footstool. I was as contented with myself as a basket of eggs. I knew it all. I was so sharp you could cut glass with me. I was the only real sport in the outfit. See? And I 'd got a roving commission to jump on people's necks. Well, *you* know what I was. And I liked myself. See?"

"But?" I began. "Arthur Penrhyn—"

"*So did he!* I don't believe any one in the world was ever stuck on me before, but *he*

was. That little ape had n't been here a week before he began to do everything he saw me do, and pretty soon he had me down so fine that he might have been my twin-brother, if we ever had such runts in our family. Well, I began to sour on the show. Understand? I could see for myself it was n't pretty. Well, one day I came around a corner, and there was that baboon sassing back to old man Billings. I was just going to pick him up and break his neck, when I felt kind of sick at my stomach, and I says to myself, 'You swine! that 's the way *you* 've been treating that white man! How do you like yourself now?'"

Big Mitch clutched desperately at his rumpled hair.

"I 'm going to be a gentleman," he grunted, "if I have to chew gravel to do it. I 'll do it, though, and I 'll show up some day and surprise the old man before he cashes in his last lung. But if I don't get a fresh start pretty soon, I 'll do something to that Penrhyn monkey that won't be any young lady's dancing-class, you bet your boots!"

* * *

I told Billings. First he paid me fifty dollars. Then he made a bonfire of all his theosophic outfit. Then he went down to the quarry and announced that he was his own boss from that time on; and by way of a sample demonstration he called up Arthur Penrhyn and knocked the everlasting Ghoollah out of him. Then he came back to the house and looked at the thermometer.

To this day, I never see champagne without thinking of drinking some.

CUTWATER OF SENECA.

CUTWATER OF SENECA.

HE story I am about to tell is hardly a story at all. Perhaps I had better call it a report, and let it go at that, with a word of explanation as to how I came to report it.

In 1884 a new state survey and a new re-districting act between them cut off about one-quarter of a northern timber county close to the Canada border, and delivered over the severed portion to its neighbor on the southerly side, a thickly settled county with several large towns and with important manufacturing interests. This division left the backwoods county temporarily without a judiciary or a place of holding court. But the act provided for the transfer of all pending cases to the courts of the more fortunate county down below, and gave the backwoods District Attorney the privilege of trying in the said courts such cases as might arise in his own bailiwick during his term of office then current.

No such cases occurred, however, until the period stated by the act was nearly at an end, when the District Attorney of the mutilated county came down to Metropole, our County Seat, to try a murder case. As our backwoods

neighbors were a somewhat untrammelled, uncouth and free-and-easy folk at their quietest, his coming naturally attracted some curious interest, especially after it became known that he had come into town sitting side by side with the prisoner in the smoking-car, and discussing politics with him. His name was Judge Cutwater, and he was generally spoken of as Cutwater of Seneca — perhaps because he had at some time been a Judge in Seneca, New York; perhaps

because there was no comprehensible reason for so calling him, any more than there was comprehensible reason for various and sundry other things about him.

He was a man who might have been sixty

or seventy or eighty. Indeed, he might have been a hundred, and he may be now, for all I know. But he was lean, wiry, agile, supple and full of eternal youth. He might have been good-looking if he had cared to be, for he had a fine old-fashioned eagle face, and a handsome, flowing gray moustache, the grace of which was spoiled by a straggling thin wisp of chin whiskers, and a patch of gray stubble on each cheek. And, of course, he chewed tobacco profusely and diffusely, and in his long, grease-stained, shiny broadcloth coat, his knee-bagged breeches, his big slouch hat, and his eye-glasses with heavy black horn rims, suspended from his neck by a combination of black ribbon and pink string, he looked what he was, as clearly as though he had been labelled — the representative of the Majesty of the Law among a backwoods people out of odds with fortune, desperate, disheartened, down on their luck, and lost to self-respect.

He said he was a good Democrat, and I think he was. He saw the prisoner locked up, bade him a kindly "Good night, Jim," and ordered the jailer to let him have all the whiskey he wanted. Then Judge Cutwater called on his brother of the local bench, greeting him with a ceremonious and stately dignity that absolutely awed the excellent old gentleman, and dropping an enormous Latin quotation on him as he departed, just by way of utterly flattening him out. After that he strolled over to the hotel, grasped the landlord warmly by the hand, and in the space of half an hour told him a string of stories of such startling novelty, humor and unfitness for publication that, as the landlord enthusiastically

declared, the recent Drummers' Convention could not be said to be "in it" with the old man.

The next day the case of Jim Adsum for the murder of his mate in a logging camp was called in court; and District Attorney Cutwater's trying of it was a circus that nearly drove old Judge

Potter into an apoplectic fit, and kept the whole court room in what both those eminent jurists united — it was the only thing they *did* unite in — in characterizing as a disgraceful uproar.

And yet, somehow, by four o'clock he had evidence enough in to convict the prisoner; the defence had not a single exception worth the noting, and was rattled as to its state of mind; and that weird old prosecutor, who repeatedly spoke of the prisoner at the bar as "Jim," and made no secret of the fact that they had been bosom friends and companions in the forest, had

worked up a case that made the best lawyers in the room stare at him with looks of puzzled surprise and amazed respect.

When he rose to sum up, he slowly and thoughtfully drew a tin tobacco-box from his trousers' pocket, opened it and deposited therein his quid, after passing his right hand, with a rapid and skillful motion, across his gray moustache. This feat he performed with a dignity that at once fascinated and awed the beholder. Then he began:

"Your Honor *and* Gentlemen of the Jury: It is a rare and a seldom occurrence that a prosecuting official, sworn to exert his utmost energies to further the execution of the law, is called upon to invoke the awful vengeance of that law, and the retribution demanded by outraged humanity, upon the head of one under whose blanket he has lain within the cold hollows of the snow-clad woods; with whom he has shared the meagre food of the pioneer; side by side with whom he has struggled for his rights and his liberties, at the daily and hourly risk of his life, with half-breed Injuns and with half-breeder Kanucks. Sech, gentlemen, is the duty that lies before this servant of the Law to-day; and sech, gentlemen, is the duty that will be done, without fear or favor, without consideration of friendship or hallowed association; and this man, Jim Adsum, knows it, knowing me, as well as he ever knew anything in the fool life that is now drawing to a close.

"You have heard, Gentlemen of the Jury, the evidence that has been laid before you on

the part of the prosecution, and you have heard the attempt made by the learned counsel for the defence to discredit that evidence in his eloquent but frivolous opening on behalf of his unfortunate client. I trust that you have given to the one the appreciative attention which it deserves, and that you have let the other slip, naked and shivering, into the boundless oblivion of your utter contempt.

"What, Gentlemen of the Jury, are the circumstances of this case? We learn by the testimony for the people that on the twenty-seventh of November a party of seven men started off for the upper waters of the Sagus River, some to join a lumber camp, and others, among them this defendant, James Adsum, and his victim, Peter Biaux, a Frenchman, in the pursuit of their usual vocation — which may be said to be hunting for fur-skins, on general principles. This party of seven men is snowed up, and goes into camp at the junction of Sagus and First Rivers, and for eleven days remains thus snow-bound in that icy solitude, the only human beings within hundreds of miles.

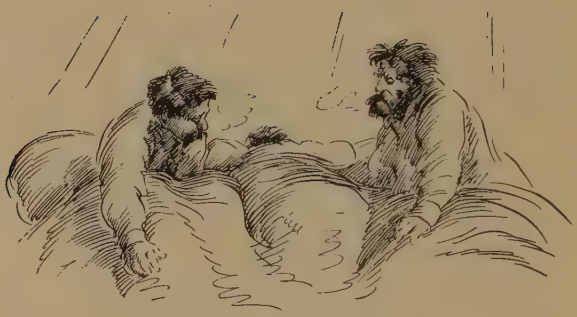
"There has been, Gentlemen of the Jury, as has been shown to you, an old grudge between the prisoner at the bar and the deceased; a grudge of many years standing. There is no use of going into the origin of that grudge. Some says it was cards; some, business; some, drink; and I personally know that it was a woman; but that makes no difference before this present tribunal. Let it be enough that there was bad blood between the men; that it broke forth, as two witnesses have told you, day

after day, within the confines of that little camp crowded within its snow-bound arena in the heart of the immeasurable solitudes of the wintry forest. Again and again the other members of the party intervened to make peace between them. At last, upon the eighth day of December, matters come to a crisis, and a personal encounter ensued between the two men, in the course of which the deceased, being a Frenchman, is badly mauled, and Jim, here, being without his knife, through carelessness, is correspondingly cut. The two are separated; and, for fear of further mischief, the Frenchman is sent down the river to fish through the ice, and the prisoner is kept in the camp. That night, by order of the head of the party, he sleeps between two men. These two men have told you their story — how one of them woke in the night at the sound, as he thought, of a distant shot, and became aware that Adsum

was no longer at his side — how, reaching out his hand, he grasped another hand, and taking it for the prisoner's, was reassured and fell asleep again — and how, weeks afterward, he first found out that that hand was the hand of the man who had been detailed to sleep on the other side of the prisoner. You have heard, gentlemen, how these two men awoke in the morning to find Adsum lying between them, shaking and shivering with a chill under his heavy blanket. You have heard of the long and unsuccessful search for Peter Biaux, and of the accidental discovery of his mangled body three months later, under the ice of the Sagus River, at a point ten miles below the camp. You have heard how each of these witnesses was haunted by a suspicion that he had unwittingly betrayed the trust reposed in him, and how, at last, when they spoke together of their watch on that fatal night, their suspicion flashed, illumined with the fire of heaven's truth, into a hijjus certainty.

"You have been told, gentlemen, that the case of the people rests upon circumstantial evidence. It does, gentlemen; it does; and the circumstances are all there. You have heard how when these two witnesses exchanged notes, they came to one conclusion, and that is the conclusion to which I shall bring your minds. The witness Duncan said to the witness Atwood: 'Jim done it!' The witness Atwood replied to him: 'Jim done it!' And I say to you, Gentlemen of the Jury: 'Jim *done* it!' And you done it, Jim; you know you did!

"And now, gentlemen, what sort of a man is this prisoner at the bar? We must consider



him for the purposes of this trial as two men — on the one hand, as the brave, upright and courageous trapper which he has on numberless occasions, to my personal knowledge, shown himself to be — and I may say to you, Gentlemen of the Jury, that I would not be here talking to you now if he had not a-been on one or two occasions. And on the other hand, Gentlemen of the Jury, I am going to show him to you as the red-handed murderer I always told him he would be if he gave the rein to his violent passions. Besides, the darn fool 's drunk half the time.

"You have been told, gentlemen, by the learned counsel for the defence, that this crime was committed in a rough country, where deeds of violence are so common that it is possible that this man may have died by another hand, murdered by a totally different person, for totally different causes and reasons, and under circumstances totally unconnected with the circumstances set forth in this case. Gentlemen, it *is* a rough country — rough as the speech of its

children, rough as their food and fare, rough as the storms they face, and nigh as rough as the whiskey they drink. But it is a country, gentlemen, where every man knows his neighbor's face and his neighbor's heart, where the dangers and privations of life draw men closer together than they are drawn in great cities like this beautiful town of yours, which is honored by the citizens I see sot before me in this jury box. In that great snow-clad wilderness, on that bitter eighth of December, with the thermometer thirty degrees below zero, I can assure you, gentlemen, that there was no casual, accidental, extemporaneous murderer lilly-twiddling around that chilly solitude, sauntering among twenty-foot snowdrifts for the purpose of striking down a total stranger with nineteen distinct and separate cuts, and then fading away into nothingness like the airy fabric of a vision. And Jim doing nothing all that time? Gentlemen, the contention of the counsel ain't *sense!*

"Gentlemen, I wish I could tell you that it was so. I wish I could tell you so for Jim's

sake. I wish I could tell you so for your own sakes, for on you is soon to rest the awful yet proud responsibility of deciding that a fellow human being's life is forfeit to his blood-guiltiness. I wish I could tell you so for my own sake, regarding myself as a friend of Jim's. But it is the District Attorney, the Prosecutor for the People, that you must listen to while he tells you the story of what happened that night.

"It was half-past eleven of that night when this man Adsum arose. How do I know? Look in the almanac and see where the moon stood at half-past eleven! It was then that he slipped from between his two guards and drew back to where the flickering camp-fire cast the shadow of a pine tree on the wall of snow that shut in their little resting-place. There he stood in that shadow — a shadow that laid on his soul and on his face — and waited to see if one of his comrades stirred. At his feet lay the two men that had been set to guard him, Jared Duncan and Bill Atwood. Eb Spence laid over the way with his feet to the fire. By him laid Sol Geary and Kentucky Wilson. Why, Jim, I can see it all just as if I was there! And then you — he — then, Gentlemen of the Jury, this prisoner at the bar, slipped from that camp where his companions lay, bound to him as he was bound to them, in the faith of comradeship; and, as he left that little circle, that spot trodden out of the virgin snow, he left behind him his fidelity, his self-respect and his manhood; his mind and soul and heart full of the black and devilish thought of taking by treacherous surprise the life of a comrade. Up

to that hour, his spirit had harbored no sech evil thought. The men he had theretofore killed —and I am not saying, gentlemen, that he had not killed enough—had been killed in fair and open fight, and there is not a one of them all but will be glad and proud to meet him as gentleman to gentleman at the Judgement Day. But now it was with *murder* in his heart—base, cowardly, faithless murder — that he left that camp; it was with murder in his heart that he

sneaked, crouching low, down where the heavy shadows hid the margin of the ice-bound stream. It was with murder in his heart that he laid himself flat upon his belly on the ice when he came within two rod of the Beaver Dam, and

worked along, keeping ever in the shadow till he come down to where that Frenchman, who, six hours before, had et out of the same pan with him, stood with his light by his side, gazing down into the black hole in the ice that was to be the mouth of his grave and the portal of his entrance into eternity. Murder, gentlemen, murder nerved his arm when he struck out that light with the fur cap you see now in his hand; and murder's self filled him with a maniac's rage as he rose to his feet and shot and stabbed the defenceless back of his unsuspecting comrade. This, gentlemen, this—and no tale of a prowling stranger—this, gentlemen, is the *truth;* and I will appeal to the prisoner, himself, gentlemen, to bear me out. Jim Adsum, you can lie to this Judge and you can lie to this Jury; you can lie to your neighbors and you can lie to your own conscience; but you can't lie to old man Cutwater, and you know it. Now, Jim, was not that just about the way you done it?"

And Jim nodded his head, turned the fur cap over in his hands, and assented quietly:

"Just about."

Twenty-five minutes later the Jury went out, and Judge Cutwatèr stalked slowly and thoughtfully over to the prisoner, and touched him on the shoulder.

"Jim," he said, meditatively, "if I know anything about juries, and I think I do, I 've hanged you on that talk as sure as guns. Your man's summing-up did n't amount to pea-soup. I 'm sorry, of course; but there was n't no way out of it for either you or me. However, I 'll tell you what I 'll do. My term as District

Attorney expires to-morrow at twelve; and, if you 'll send that fool counsel of yours round to me at the tahvern, I 'll show him how to drive a horse and cart through the law in this case and get you a new trial, like rolling off a log."

And as Mr. Adsum got not only one but three new trials during the time that I kept track of him, I have every reason to believe that Judge Cutwater of Seneca kept his promise as a man, as faithfully as he performed his duty as a prosecutor for the people.

MR. WICK'S AUNT.

MR. WICK'S AUNT.

THE Wick family had run the usual course of families for many, many years, and was quite old and respectable when causes, natural and extraordinary, none of them being pertinent to this statement, reduced said family to three members, viz:

Miss Angelica Sudbury Wick, of the Boston branch of the family, who lived in the house of her guardian, old Jonas Thatcher, with whom we have no further concern, and who is therefore to be considered as turned down, although in his day he was a highly respected leather merchant. Miss Angelica Wick was fair and sweet and good up to the last requirement of young womanhood.

Mr. Winkelman Hempstead Wick, of the Long Island branch of the family, a distant cousin of the young lady, and a young man of conscientious mind, an accountant by profession, and very nearly ready to buy out his employer.

Mr. Aaron Bushwick Wick, also of the Long Island branch of the family, the grand-uncle of young Winkelman, who had brought up the young man in his own house, and who loved

him more than anything else in the world, until, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, he fell in love with, and married a lady named Louisa Nasmyth Pine, whom we will dismiss from consideration as we dismissed the old leather merchant, although she was a most estimable and attractive lady, and did fancy embroidery extremely well. Her only concern with this story is that she bore the elder Mr. Wick a baby, and died three or four months subsequently. But that was enough; plenty; as much as was necessary.

The way that marriage came about was this: old Mr. Wick wanted to see the Wick family perpetuated, but young Mr. Wick was one of those cautious, careful, particular men who get to be old bachelors before they know it. No girl whom he knew was quite exactly what he wanted. If she had been, she would have been too good for any man on earth. In fact, it took young Mr. Wick a number of years to realize that any way he could marry, he could only marry a human being like himself. In the meanwhile his grand-uncle grew impatient; and finally he said that if Winkelman did n't fix on a girl and get her to agree to marry him by the first of next January, he, Aaron Bushwick Wick, would marry somebody himself. Miss Louisa Nasmyth Pine, being then close on to forty, helped him to get under the line just in time to save his grand-nephew from engaging himself to an ill-tempered widow with five children — which is the kind of woman that those particular men generally pick up in the end. And it serves them right.

And so this marriage brought into existence the baby — Beatrice Brighton Wick.

Old Mr. Wick's endeavors to hand the name of Wick down to posterity were crowned, as you see, with only partial success. He had a Wick, it was true, but it was a Wick that would be put out by marriage. He found himself obliged to fall back on young Winkelman, and he bethought himself of the distant cousin in Boston. He knew nothing of her, but he reasoned that if she were a Wick, she must be everything that was lovely and desirable; and so he said to his grand-nephew:

"Wink, you know that I am a man of my word. If you will go and marry that girl, and if the two of you will take care of that confounded baby, who is crying again, while I put in three or four years in Europe till it gets to some sort of a rational age, I will buy your employer out, guarantee you what is necessary for you to live on in some healthy country place — no city air for that child, do you understand! — and when I die you 'll be her guardian and have the usufruct of her estate and be residuary legatee and all that sort of thing."

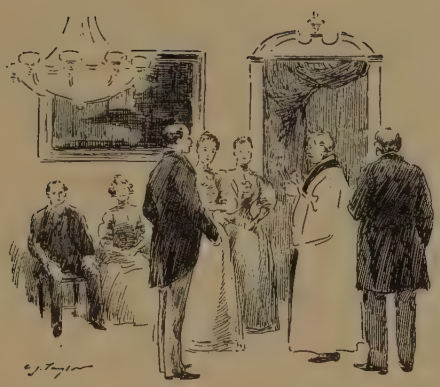
Winkelman Wick knew that his grand-uncle was a man of his word, and that "all that sort of thing" meant a very, very comfortable sort of thing, for the old gentleman was rich and had liberal ideas, and drank more port than was good for him. He had no fancy for marrying a strange

girl, but he thought there could be no harm in going out to Boston and taking a look at his, so far, distant cousin. Under pretense of wanting to write up the Wick genealogy, he went to Boston, and passed some time under Mr. Thatcher's hospitable roof. He found Angelica Wick all that his fancy might have painted her but had n't; and, as Mr. Thatcher had six daughters of his own, all of them older than Angelica, and none so good-looking, he did not find any difficulty in inducing his pretty cousin to marry him — and she did not back out even when he sprung the baby contract on her. She said that she was a true woman and that she would stand by him, but that she thought it might be a little awkward. Feminine intuition is a wonderful thing. When it is right, it is apt to be right.

The elder Mr. Wick was as good as his word, — only, as is often the case with people who pride themselves upon being as good as their word, he took his own word too seriously. He died of apoplexy shortly after landing at Liver-

pool. His will, however, was probated in New York, and thus escaped a legacy tax. The will fully carried out every promise he had made to his young kinsman, but he had drawn it to follow absolutely the terms of his proposition. He had never for an instant contemplated the possibility of his dying before he wanted to — people who make their wills very rarely do — and he had so drawn the document that Mr. and Mrs. Winkelman Wick could come into their inheritance only after carrying out their part of the contract, which was to take care of their aunt, baby Beatrice Brighton Wick, for the space of four years, during which Mr. Aaron Bushwick Wick had intended, without consideration of the designs of Divine Providence, to sojourn in Europe.

This brings the situation exactly down to bed-rock. On the tenth of April, eighteen hundred and tumty-tum, Mr. Winkelman Wick and Miss Angelica Wick were married in the old Wick house on Montague Street, Brooklyn. On the twenty-fifth of April Mr. Aaron Bushwick Wick ended his journey across the Atlantic at the Port of Liverpool, England. On the twenty-seventh of April he started on that other journey for which your heirs pay your passage money — and he certainly was not happy in his starting place. On the twenty-eighth of the same month young Mr. and Mrs. Wick knew the terms of their grand-uncle's will; and on the thirtieth the old Wick mansion was in the hands of the trustees, and the young Wicks were in a hotel in charge of their baby-aunt, Beatrice, who was herself in charge of an aged Irishwoman, whose feet were decidedly more intelligent than her brain.



That is one of the beauties of Ireland. You can get every variety of human being there from a cherub to a chimpanzee.

They were very comfortable in the hotel, and would have liked to stay there, but that awful contract had as many ways of making itself disagreeable as an octopus has. They had pledged themselves, with and for the benefit of the baby, to provide a suitable place in the country without unreasonable delay. Their lawyer informed them that reasonable delay meant three weeks and not one day more. As their contract began on the tenth of April, they had, therefore, one day left to them to carry out this provision. Moreover, the contract, after defining the phrase "a suitable country place" in terms that would have fitted a selling advertisement of the Garden of Eden, went on to specify that no place should be considered suitable that was not at least forty miles from any city of twenty thou-

sand inhabitants, or upward. When Mr. Aaron Bushwick Wick wanted pure country air for a baby, he wanted it *pure*. If he could, he would probably have had it brought in sealed bottles.

Picking a place of residence for four long years is not an agreeable task under conditions such as these, especially to a young couple prematurely saddled with parental cares, and equipped with only twenty days of experience in the matrimonial state. They discussed the situation for hours on end. Mrs. Wick wept, and Mr. Wick contributed more profanity than is generally used by a green husband. They even asked the Irish nurse if she could not suggest some suitable place, and they stated the whole situation to her very clearly and carefully. She thought a while, and then suggested Ballymahon, County Longford, Ireland. However, indirectly, she assisted them to solve the problem. Mr. Wick told her to go to Jericho; and Mrs. Wick suddenly brightened up and said:

"Why, that 's so, Winkelman!"

Mr. Wick stared in horror at his wife. Was the sweet young thing going crazy under the strain? But no; Mrs. Wick was looking as bright as a rose after an April shower, and she grew brighter and brighter as she stood thinking in silence, nodding her pretty head affirmatively, pursing her lips, and checking off the various stages of her thought with her finger tip on her cheek. Finally she said:

"And you could use the little room for a dressing room. Yes, dear, I 'm quite certain it will do beautifully."

After a while Mr. Wick convinced his wife

that he was not a mind-reader, and then he got some information. Of course she did not stay convinced — no woman ever did. All women think that the mechanism of their thought is visible like a model in a glass case.

Mrs. Wick had forgotten that she herself owned a country house. This was more excusable than it seems on the face of it, for she had never seen the house, nor had she ever expected to see it. In fact, it was hardly to be called a house; it was only a sort of bungalow or pavilion which had once belonged to a club of sportsmen, and which her father had taken for a bad debt. It was situated in the village of Jericho, of which she knew nothing more than that her father had said that it was a good place for trout, and was accessible by several different railroads. Concerning the house itself she was better informed. She had had to copy the plans of its interior on many occasions when her guardian had made futile efforts to sell or to rent it. She also knew that the place was fully furnished, and that an old woman lived in it as care-taker, rent free, and liable to be dispossessed at any moment.

The nurse was told that they would go to Jericho with her. She only asked would the baby take her bottle now or wait till she got there?

* * *

Jericho Junction is one of those lonely and forsaken little stopping-places on the outskirts of the great woods that are the sportsman's paradise, with a dreary, brown-painted, pine box,

just big enough for the ticket agent, the baggage master, the telegraph operator, the flagman, the local postmaster, and the casual or possible intending passenger. As this makes two persons in all, the structure is not large.

The casual passenger and the full corps of local railway officials were both present at Jericho Junction when the 6:30 P. M. train loomed out of the dreary, raw May twilight, and drew up in front of the little box. Now, these two occupants of the tiny station were neighbors but not friends. Farmer Byam Beebe lived "a piece back in the country, over t'wards Ellenville South Farms." Mr. John D. Wilkins, station agent, telegraph operator, and all the rest of the functionaries of Jericho Junction, dwelt in his little box, midway between Ellenville South Farms and the nearest important town, Bunker's Mills, a considerable manufacturing settlement. A houseless stretch of ten miles separated the neighbors; but not even ten miles had stood

between them and a grudge of many years' duration. Beebe hated Wilkins, and Wilkins hated Beebe. Never mind why. They were close neighbors for that region; and that more close neighbors do not kill each other testifies every day to the broad spread of Christian charity.

Mr. Beebe so hated Mr. Wilkins that he made it a regular practice to stop at the station after his day's work was done, to wait for this particular train. Silent and unfriendly, he would loaf in the station for an hour and a half, and the station master dared not put him out, for he was possibly an intending passenger on the train as far as the next flag-station, which was a railroad crossing a mile and a quarter further on. Mr. Beebe never bought a ticket from Mr. Wilkins, on the occasions when he did ride. He paid his way on the cars, five cents, plus ten cents rebate-check, and this rebate-check he redeemed at Mr. Wilkins's office the next day. Furthermore, he made a point of going out just before the train arrived, and waiting on the other side of it to get in, so that Mr. Wilkins could not tell whether he boarded the train or walked off through the thick woods that crowded down to the very edge of the line.

Thus it happened that as the train arrived on the evening of the first of May, Mr. Beebe, being on the farther side of the track from the railroad station, saw an Irish nurse blunder helplessly off the platform in front of him, holding a six months' old baby in her arms, and stand staring straight before her in evident bewilderment. Mr. Beebe accosted her in all kindness:

"Your folks got off the other side, I guess. This here ain't the right side for nobody, only me." Then he prodded the baby with a large and horny finger. "How old will that young 'un be?" he inquired.

"Six months, sorr," replied the nurse; "gahn on seven."

"Is that so?" said Mr. Beebe, with polite affectation of interest. "Folks been long married?"

"Wan month, sorr," replied the nurse.

"*Which?*" inquired Mr. Beebe.

"Wan month, sorr," replied the nurse.

* * *

On the other side of the train of cars, station agent John D. Wilkins saw an old-fashioned carryall drive up, conducted by an elderly woman of austere demeanor. She was dressed in black alpaca, and her look was stern and severe, and, necessarily, highly respectable. He saw a young man and a young woman descend from the train, and saw the young man hand the young woman into the carryall behind the elderly lady. Then, as the young man turned as though to look for some one following him, he heard the young woman say:

"Winkelman, dear, I don't care *what* her age is, you *must* spank your aunt!"

* * *

When Mr. John D. Wilkins heard what he heard, he forgot the rules of the railroad company, according to which he should have remained on the platform until the train had left. He knew that just at 6:30 his particular crony, Mr. Hiram Stalls, telegraph operator at Bunker's Mills, and news-gatherer for the Bunker's Mills *Daily Eagle*, went off duty in his telegraphic capacity, and became an unalloyed journalist. He caught Mr. Stalls in the act of saying good-night, and he talked to him over the wire in dot and dash thus:

"That you, Hi? Meet me at the station

when the 7:21 gets in. I 've got a news item for you that will make the *Eagle* scream this trip, sure."

If Mr. Wilkins had not been so zealous in breaking his employer's rules in the interest of personal journalism, he would have heard the young man thus enjoined to inflict humiliating punishment upon a parent's sister, respond to this cruel counsel in these words: "It will only make her cry more; — why, where the deuce is the brat, anyway?"

Moreover, he would have seen Mr. Beebe pilot an Irish nurse and a bundled-up baby around the rear of the train, and then jump on the platform as the cars started, with all the vigor and energy which the possession of a real mean story about a fellow human being can impart to the most aged and stiffened limbs. But he did n't. What would become of the gossip business if those engaged in it stopped to find things out?

* * *

When Cæsar expressed a preference for being the first man in a village, over a second-fiddle job in Rome, he probably never reflected how much it would rile him if he should hap-

pen to find out that there was just as big a man in the next village who did n't know Cæsar from a cheese-cake; yet that is the poor limitation of local bigness. Great is Mr. Way in Wayback, and great is Mr. Hay in Hayville; but what is Mr. Way in Hayville, and what is Mr. Hay in Wayback? Two nothings, two casual strangers, with no credit, with no say-no, two mere chunks of humanity whose value to the community is strictly proportionate to the size of their greenback wads, and the laxity or tenacity of their several grips thereon.

At nine o'clock that night two local Cæsars, in two towns but a score of miles from each other, donned the ermine of power, waved the sceptre of authority, and told their pale-faced but devoted followers that "SOMETHING had got to be done about IT."

The "IT," of course, was an "OUTRAGE" — it always is when something has got to be done about it, and the something generally means just about nothing.

In the front parlor of his large mansard-roof residence, Mr. Bodger — Mr. Theophilus Scranton Bodger, prominent manufacturer, pillar of the Church, candidate for the mayoralty, and general all around magnate and muldoon of Bunker's Mills, sat amid surroundings of much elegance, black walnut, gilt, plush and hand-painted tidies, and slapping a broad palm with a burly fist, told Mr. Stalls, Mr. Wilkins and Mrs. Bodger that something had got to be done about it.

At the same moment, in the Sunday School room of the Baptist Church in Ellenville South

Farms, Mr. Manfred Lusk Hackfeather, theological student, Sunday School superintendent, social leader and idol of the ladies in Ellenville South Farms, told six fluttering feminine things, who gazed at him in affectionate awe, that something had got to be done about it.

Mr. Bodger's business was making socks. Mr. Hackfeather may have been wearing a pair of socks of Mr. Bodger's make at that very instant, yet had he never heard of Bodger; nor did Mr. Bodger know that any part of his growing business was built up on the money of a man named Hackfeather.

* * *

To say that a party of Brooklyn people, conducted in an old-fashioned carryall, by an elderly woman of austere demeanor, entered the deep pine wood in a chilled twilight of early Spring certainly ought to convey an impression of gloom. And certainly gloom of the deepest enshrouded the beginning of that ride. Diligent inquiry elicited from the elderly woman that she

was, as the Wicks supposed, Miss Hipsy, the care-taker; that she had received their telegram, or she would n't have been there nohow; that she had had a contrack with the late owner of the premises; that she had lived up to it, whatever other people hed or hed n't done; that what she had done she would do, and that if she was not satisfactory to other parties, or if other parties was not satisfactory to her, which was most likely to be the case, she was willin', as far as she was concerned, to take herself off just as soon as she could; that she thanked Providence she had folks in Ellenville she could go to, as respectable as some, that she could go to and no obligations to nobody, and that she was not aware that her contrack called for no general conversation.

Now this extremely discouraging way and manner of Miss Hipsy's was entirely general and impersonal, like dampness or a close smell in a long unused house. Congenitally sub-acid, a failure to accomplish any sort of an early or late love affair had completely soured her, and many years of solitude had put a gray-green coating of mildew over her moral nature. But the Wicks did not know this, and, remembering their peculiar position, it made them feel extremely uncomfortable.

But the moon came out in the soft Spring sky, and the mists of the evening rolled away, and a great silvery radiance wrapped the cathedral-like spires and pinnacles of the broad spreading pine forest, and, after awhile, the rough corduroy road grew smoother, and the baby stopped crying and went to sleep, and they

were all, except Miss Hipsy, beginning to nod off just a little when the wheels crunched on a driveway of white pebbles, and they looked up to see a spacious low building standing out black against the sky, except where a half a dozen brightly lit windows winked at them like friendly eyes.

This was the bungalow, and here they found a sportsman's supper of cold meat and ale awaiting them. Miss Hipsy told them, by way of leaving no doubt of the unfriendliness of her intentions, that this refection was provided for in the contract. So, also, must have been the deliciously soft beds in which they were presently all fast asleep, even to the baby. And when a traveling baby will sleep, anybody else can.

In the morning the elder Wicks opened their eyes on a world of wonderment and bewilderment. They found themselves living in a well-appointed and commodious club-house, on the banks of a broad and beautiful lake, across which other similar structures with pretty, low, peaked roofs looked at them in neighborly fash-

ion from the other side. Mrs. Wick said that it was too nice for anything.

There was nothing mysterious about the surprise which the Wicks had found awaiting them. Sportsmen have a habit of referring to their possessions in a depreciatory way. They call a comfortable club-house a "box" or a "bungalow" or a "shack," and they make nothing of calling a costly hotel a "camp." Indeed, they seem to try to impart a factitious flavor of profanity by christening such structures, whenever they can, "Middle Dam Camp" or "Upper Dam Camp." And since Mrs. Wick's father's club had died out, the further side of Jericho Pond had become a fashionable resort, maintaining two or three Winter and Summer Sanitariums.

Thanks to the contract, they made an excellent breakfast, and their praises of the fare mollified Miss Hipsy to some slight extent. Then they remembered the baby, and after some search they found the Irish nurse walking it up and down on a broad sunny terrace at the back of the house. Below stretched an old-fashioned garden, full of homely, pleasant flowers and simples just beginning to show their buds to the tempting month of May.

The scene was so pleasant that Mr. and Mrs. Wick started out for a walk, and the walk was so pleasant that they prolonged it, — prolonged it until they reached the settlement on the other side of the lake, and the people there were so pleasant that they staid to dinner at a club, and did not get back till nearly supper-time.

* * *

You will please observe that, so far as the members of the Wick family are concerned, they stand as clear at this point as they did when we got them down to bed-rock level, on the tenth of April, eighteen hundred and tumty-tum. Their ways have been ways of pleasantness, and their paths have been paths of peace. The two Wicks we are dealing with, like all the other Wicks, have kept their engagements and filled their contract. They have minded their own business and nobody else's. They are, in fact, all straight on the record.

But now we have to recount the fortunes of two social reformers, and it is hard for a reformer to keep straight on the record. Whether they have a genuine reform on their hands, like Martin Luther or the Abolitionists, or whether they are like Mr. Harold Kettledrum Monocle, of New York, who thinks that the Mayor of that city ought to be elected by Harvard College, they are

all likely to have what one might call a mote-and-beam sort of time with their neighbors.

Thus did it happen with Mr. Bodger, of Bunker's Mills, and with Mr. Hackfeather, of Ellenville South Farms, who both found their way to Jericho Pond that pleasant afternoon, the theological student a little in advance of the business man. Mr. Hackfeather came to rebuke a shocking case of impropriety in two so young; Mr. Bodger came to express the sentiment of society at large toward a man who would inflict corporal chastisement on a lady.

Terrible as with an army with banners, and consumed with the fire of righteousness, Mr. Hackfeather bore down on the old-fashioned garden at the back of the bungalow, in the full glory of the Spring afternoon. As to his person, he was attired in a long, black diagonal frock-coat, worn unbuttoned, and so well worn that its flaps waved in the wind with all the easy grace of a linen duster. Trousers of the kind that chorus together: "We are pants," adorned his long, thin but heavily-kneed legs. A shoe-string necktie, a low cut waistcoat, and a whole-souled, oh-be-joyful shirtfront added to this simple but harmonious effect, and his last year's hat had a mellow tone against the pale Spring-time greens. He tackled Miss Hipsy (who had so far relented from her austerity as to take the baby while the nurse got dinner,) in that old-fashioned garden; and the benign influences of budding nature had no effect whatever upon his pious wrath. He pointed out the discrepancy in the dates of the vital statistics of the Wick family, and he told Miss Hipsy that she was

the servant of sin, (who had been a respectable woman for forty-three years, and if some as ought to know better said it was forty-seven there was no truth in it,) that she was the slave of iniquity and abettor of sin, (and if them she knowed of, one leastways, was alive to-day she would not be insulted,) that the demon vice should not rear its hideous head in that unpolluted community, (and she was n't rarin' no heads, but she could go to them she knowed of as could rare their heads as high as him or any of his friends,) and that even if he, Mr.

Hackfeather, had to face all the minions of Satan, and all the retinue of the Scarlet Woman, he would purify the stain or die in the attempt. Mr. Hackfeather's allusion to the Lady of Babylon probably was born of a mixed condition of mind, and a desire to use forcible language. It did not seem clear to him and it did not seem clear to Miss Hipsy, either. She said she was no such a thing, and never expected

to live to see the day she would be so called, especially at her time of life. And, tearful and vociferous, Miss Hipsy marched back to the bungalow, delivered over the baby to the Irish nurse, packed her little old hair trunk with the round top, dragged it down herself to the lake-front dock, and there sat on it in stern grandeur until the afternoon boat came down the lake and took her to Ellenville, presumably to the sheltering arms of them that she knowed of.

Meanwhile, a thing she did not know of was happening on the other side of the house in that same old-fashioned garden. Mr. Bodger, accompanied by Mr. Stalls and Mr. Wilkins, had arrived from Bunker's Mills to interview the new arrival in the county, whose latitude in administering corporal punishment had aroused the indignation of every humane heart that had been made acquainted with the station master's story. Mr. Bodger saw the departure of the weeping woman of elderly aspect, he heard her wails, and he saw their cause in a strange young man. This was all the evidence that he wanted. Mr. Bodger made no inquiries into identity or relationship. He weighed two hundred and twenty pounds, he had three men behind him, and he fell upon Mr. Hackfeather as the cyclone falls upon the chicken-coop.

* * *

The consequences of these two meetings were so far-reaching, extending to warrants of arrest, counter charges, civil suits and much civiler compromises, that it was July before the

ladies of the Bodger and Hackfeather families picked up their threads of social intercourse, which were knotted only at one point. To both of them it occurred on a fine Summer's day to call on the new comers at the old bungalow by way of seeing whether the innocent causes of so much dire mischief knew anything about the agitation they had caused.

As the train from Bunker's Mills met the boat from Ellenville, Mr. Bodger's wife and Mr. Hackfeather's mother arrived at the same time, and, sitting in the sunny reception room of the bungalow, glared at each other in chilly and silent hostility, while poor, innocent little Mrs. Wick, much troubled by their strange behavior, tried to talk to both of them at once, and rattled away in her embarrassment until she had talked a great deal more than she had meant to. She told them all the story of Beatrice Brighton Wick, and the will, and the hurried flight to Jericho, and at their surprise at finding Jericho Pond with its Summer and Winter colony so delightful a place that they hardly felt as if

they could tear themselves away from it when the four years were up. And she told them that both she and Mr. Wick had thought it might be quite awkward for so newly married a couple to be traveling with a six month's old baby, and that baby Mr. Wick's aunt.

"But, do you know," she said, "we must have been over-sensitive about it, for we never had the first least little bit of trouble. Indeed, the only mishap we had was the other way. The old woman who was in charge of the place here left us suddenly the first day without a word of warning. I could n't make out why she was dissatisfied, but my nurse, Nora, told me that she thought that Miss Hipsy thought that the baby was too young. Some people have such an objection to young babies,

you know. However, it did n't the least bit matter, for Nora turned out to be a very good cook, and I took the baby. I wanted to learn, you know."

WHAT MRS. FORTESCUE DID.

WHAT MRS. FORTESCUE DID.

IGHT in the rear of the First Congregational Church of 'Quawket, and cornerwise across the street, the Old Ladies' Home of Aquawket sits on the topmost of a series of velvety green terraces. It is a quiet street; the noisiest thing in it, or rather over it, is the bell in the church steeple, and that is as deep toned and mellow as all church bells ought to be and few church bells are. As to the Old Ladies' Home, itself, it looks like the veritable abode of peace. A great wistaria clambers over its dull brown stucco walls. Beds of old-fashioned flowers nod and sway in the chastened breezes on its two sunny sides, and thick clumps of lilacs and syringas shield it to the north and east. Dainty little dimity curtains flutter at the open windows all Summer long; and, whether it comes from the immaculately neat chambers of the old ladies, or from some of the old-fashioned flower beds, there is always, in warm weather, a faint smell of lavender floating down upon the breeze to the passer-by in the quiet street. You would never dream, to look at it, that the mad, inhuman, pitiless strife and fury of an Old Ladies'

Home raged ceaselessly, year after year, within those quiet walls.

Now suppose that every wasp in a certain wasp's nest had an individual theology of its own, totally different from the theology of any other wasp, and that each one personally conducted his theology in the real earnest calvinistic spirit — you would call that wasp's nest a pretty warm, lively, interesting domicile, would you not? Well, it would be a paradise of paralysis alongside of an Old Ladies' Home. If you want to get at the original compound tincture of envy, malice and all uncharitableness, go to a nice, respectable Old Ladies' Home with a list of "Lady Patronesses" as long as your arm, and get the genuine article in its most highly concentrated form.

There were eleven inmates of the Old Ladies' Home of Aquawket, besides the matron, the nurse, the cook, and a couple of "chore-girls." These two last led a sort of life that came very near to qualifying them for admission to the institution on a basis of premature old age. Of the real old ladies in the home,

every one of the eleven had a bitter and undying grievance against at least one, and, possibly, against ten of her companions, and the only thing that held the ten oldest of the band together was the burning scorn and hatred which they all felt for the youngest of the flock, Mrs. Williametta Fortescue, who signed what few letters she wrote "Willie," and had been known to the world as "Billy" Fortescue when she sang in comic opera and wore pink tights.

All the other old ladies said that Mrs. Fortescue was a daughter of Belial, a play actress, and no old lady, anyway. I know nothing about her ancestry — and I don't believe that she did, either; but as to the other two counts in the indictment I am afraid I must plead guilty for Mrs. Fortescue. An actress she was, to the tips of her fingers, an unconscious, involuntary, dyed-in-the-wool actress. She acted because she could not help it, not from any wish to deceive or mislead, but just because it came as natural to her as breathing. If you asked her to take a piece of pie, it was not enough for her to want the pie, and to tell you so, and to take the pie; she had to act out the whole dramatic business of the situation — her passion for pie, her eager craving and anxious expectation, her incredulous delight when she actually got the pie, and her tender, brooding thankfulness and gratitude when she had got outside of the pie, and put it where it could n't be taken away from her. No; there was n't the least bit of humbug in it all. She did want the pie; but she wanted to act, too.

It was this characteristic of Mrs. Fortescue that got her into the Old Ladies' Home on false pretenses; for, to tell the truth, Mrs. Fortescue was only an old lady by courtesy. She had beautiful white hair; but she had had beautiful white hair ever since she was twenty years old. Before she had reached that age she had had red hair, black hair, brown hair, golden hair, and hair of half-a-dozen intermediate shades. Either the hair or the hair dye finally got tired, and Mrs. Fortescue's head became white — that is, when she gave it a chance to be its natural self. That, however, was not often; and, at last, there came a day when, as her manager coarsely expressed it, "she monkeyed with her fur one time too many." For ten years she had been the leading lady in a small traveling opera company, where tire-

less industry and a willingness to wait for salary were accepted as substitutes for extreme youth and commanding talent. Ten years is a long time, especially when it is neither the first nor the second, and, possibly, not the third ten years of an actress's professional career; and when Mrs. Fortescue asked for a contract for three years more, her manager told her that he was not in the business for his health, and that while he regarded her as one of the most elegant ladies he had ever met in his life, her face was not made of India-rubber; and, furthermore, that the public was just about ready for the Spring styles in leading ladies. This did not hurt Mrs. Fortescue's feelings, for the leading juvenile had long been in the habit of calling her "Mommer, dear," whenever they had to rehearse impassioned love scenes. But it did put her on her mettle, and she tried a new hair dye, just to show what she could do. The result was a case of lead poisoning, that laid her up in a dirty little second-class hotel, in a back street of 'Quawket for three months of suffering and helplessness. The company went its way and left her, and went to pieces in the end. The greater part of her poor savings went for the expenses of her sickness. At last, when the critical period was over, her doctor got some charitably-disposed ladies and gentlemen interested in her case; and, between them all, they procured admission to the Old Ladies' Home for a poor, white-haired, half-palsied wreck of a woman, who not only was decrepit before her time, but who acted decrepitude so successfully that nobody thought

of asking her if she were less than eighty years old. I do not mean to say that Mrs. Fortescue willfully deceived her benefactors: she was old — oldish, anyway — she was helpless, partially paralyzed, and her system was permeated with lead; but when she came to add to this the correct dramatic outfit of expression, she was *so* old, and *so* sick, and so utterly miserable and stricken and done for that the hearts of the managers of the Old Ladies' Home were opened, and they took her in at half the usual entrance fee; because, as the matron very thoughtfully remarked, she could n't possibly live six weeks, and it was just so much clear gain for the institution. By the end of six weeks, however, Mrs. Fortescue was just as well as she had ever been in her life, and was acting about twice as healthy as she felt.

With her trim figure, her elastic step, and her beautiful white hair setting off her rosy cheeks — and Mrs. Fortescue knew how to have rosy cheeks whenever she wanted them — she

certainly was an incongruous figure in an Old Ladies' Home, and it was no wonder that her presence made the genuine old ladies genuinely mad. And every day of her stay they got madder and madder; for by the constitution of the Home, an inmate might, if dissatisfied with her surroundings, after a two-years' stay, withdraw from the institution, *taking her entrance fee with her.* And that was why Mrs. Fortescue staid on in the Old Ladies' Home, snubbed, sneered at, totally indifferent to it all, eating three square meals a day, and checking off the dull but health-giving weeks that brought her nearer to freedom, and the comfortable little nest-egg with which she meant to begin life again.

And yet the time came when Mrs. Fortescue's histrionic capacity won for her, if not a friend, at least an ally, out of the snarling sisterhood; and for a few brief months there was just one old woman out of the lot who was decently civil to her, and who even showed rudimentary systems of polite intentions.

* * *

This old woman was Mrs. Filley, and this was the manner of her modification.

One pleasant Spring day, a portly gentleman of powerful frame, with ruddy cheeks and short, steel-gray hair — a man whose sturdy physique hardly suited with his absent-minded, unbusiness-like expression of countenance — ascended the terraces in front of the Old Ladies' Home. His brows were knit; he looked upon

the ground as he walked, and he did not in the least notice the eleven old ladies, the matron, the nurse, the cook and the two "chore-girls" who were watching his every step with profound interest.

Mrs. Fortescue was watching the gentleman with interest, because she thought that he was a singularly fine-looking and well-preserved man, as indeed he was. All the other inmates of the Home were watching him with interest because he was Mr. Josiah Heatherington Filley, the millionaire architect, civil engineer and contractor. Their interest, however, was not excited by Mr. Filley's fame as a designer of mighty bridges, of sky-scraping office buildings, and of other triumphs of mechanical skill; they looked on him with awe and rapture simply because he was the richest man in 'Quawket, or, more properly speaking, in 'Quawket Township; for Mr. Filley lived in the old manor-house of the Filley family, a couple of miles out of town.

You might think that with a millionaire Mr. Filley coming up the steps, the heart of indigent Mrs. Filley in the Old Ladies' Home might beat high with expectation; but, as a matter of fact, it did not. In Connecticut and New Jersey family names mean no more than the name of breeds of poultry — like Plymouth Rocks or Wyandottes. All Palmers are kin, so are all Vreelands, and the Smiths of Peapack are of one stock. But so are all speckled hens, and kinship may mean no more in one case than it does in the other. In colonial times, Filleys had abounded in 'Quawket. But to Mrs. Filley of the Home the visit of Mr. Filley

of the Manor House was as the visit of a stranger; and very much surprised, indeed, was she when the great man asked to see her.

In spite of his absent-minded expression, Mr. Filley proved to be both direct and business-like. He explained his errand briefly and clearly.

Mr. Filley was a bachelor, and the last of his branch of the family. His only surviving relative was a half-brother by his mother's first marriage, who had lived a wandering and worthless life, and who had died in the West a widower, leaving one child, a girl of nine, in a

Massachusetts boarding-school. This child he had bequeathed to the loving care and attention of his brother. It is perfectly wonderful how men of that particular sort, who never can get ten dollars ahead of the world, will pick up a tremendous responsibility of that kind, and throw it around just as if it were a half-pound dumb-bell. They don't seem to mind it at all; it does not weigh upon their spirits; they will pass over a growing child to anybody who happens to be handy, to be taken care of for life, just as easily as you would hand a towel over to the next man at the wash-basin, as soon as you are done with it. Mr. Filley's half-brother may have died easily, and probably did, but he could not possibly have made such a simple job of it as he did of turning over Etta Adelina, his daughter, to the care of the half-brother whom he hardly knew well enough to borrow money from oftener than once a year.

Now, Mr. Josiah Filley had promised his mother on her death-bed that he would assume a certain sort of responsibility for the consequences of the perfectly legitimate but highly injudicious matrimonial excursion of her early youth, and so he accepted the guardianship of Etta Adelina. But he was not, as the worldly phrase it, "*too* easy." He was a profound scientific student, and a man whose mind was wrapt up in his profession, but he did not propose to make a parade-ground of himself for everybody who might feel inclined to walk over him. He had no intention of taking the care of a nine-year-old infant upon himself, and the happy idea had come to him of hunting up the last

feminine bearer of his name in the 'Quawket Old Ladies' Home, and hiring her for a liberal cash payment to represent him as a quarterly visitor to the school where the young one was confined.

"I don't suppose," he said, "there is any actual relationship between us—"

"There ain't none," interrupted Mrs. Filley; "leastwise there ain't been none since your father got money enough to send you to college."

Mr. Filley smiled indulgently.

"Well," he suggested, "suppose we re-establish relationship as cousins. All you have to do for some years to come is to visit the Tophill Institute once in three months, satisfy yourself that the child is properly taken care of and educated, and kindly treated, and to make a full and complete report to me in writing. If anything is wrong, let me know. I shall examine your reports carefully. Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, if I am satisfied that it is correct and faithful, I will send you my check for fifty dollars. Is it a bargain?"

It was a bargain, but poor old Mrs. Filley stipulated for a payment in cash instead of by check. She had once in her life been caught on a worthless note, and she never had got the

distinction between notes and checks clear in her mind. As to Mr. Josiah Filley, he was not wholly satisfied with the representative of his family, so far as grammar and manners were concerned; but he saw with his scholar's eye, that looked so absent-minded and took in so much, that the old lady was both shrewd and kindly-natured, and he felt sure that Etta Adelina would be safe in her hands.

When I said that Mrs. Filley was kindly, I meant that as a human being she was capable of kindness. Of course, as an inmate of an Old Ladies' Home, she was just as spiteful as any other of the old ladies, and her first natural impulse was to make a profound mystery of Mr. Filley's errand, not only because by so doing she could tease the other old ladies, but from a natural, old-ladylike fear that somebody else might get her job away from her. But she found herself unable to carry out her pleasant scheme in its entirety. Nine of her aged comrades, and all the members of the household staff, consumed their souls in bitterness, wondering what the millionaire had wanted of his humble kinswoman; and three times in the course of one year they saw that excellent woman put on her Sunday black silk and take her silent way to the railroad station. On the day following they saw her return, but where she had been or why she had been there they knew not. By the rules of the Home she had a right to eight days of absence annually. She told the matron that she was going to see her "folks." The matron knew well that she had not a folk in the world, but she had to take the old lady's word.

But did not those dear old ladies ask the ticket-agent at the station what station Mrs. Filley took tickets for? Indeed they did, bless them! And the ticket-agent told them that Mrs. Filley had bought a thousand-mile ticket, and that they would have to hunt up the conductors who took up her coupons on the next division of the road, if they wanted to find out. (A thousand-mile ticket, gentle reader, is a delightful device by means of which you can buy a lot of travel in one big chunk, and work it out in little bits whenever you want to. Next to a sure and certain consciousness of salvation, it gives its possessor more of a feeling of pride and independence than anything else this life has to offer.)

And yet Mrs. Filley's happiness was incomplete, for it was necessary to let one person into her secret. She put it on her spectacles, which had not been of the right kind for a number of years, owing to the inferiority of modern glass ware, but defective education was

what brought Mrs. Filley to making a confidant of Mrs. Fortescue. No spectacles that ever were made would have enabled Mrs. Filley to spell, and when she began her first report thus:

"i sene the gerl She had or to hav cod-livor roil —"

even she, herself, felt that it was hardly the report for Mr. Filley's fifty-dollars. Here is the way that Mrs. Fortescue started off that report in her fine Italian hand:

"It gives me the greatest pleasure, my dear Mr. Filley, to inform you that, pursuant to your instructions, I journeyed yesterday to the charming, and I am sure salubrious shades of Tophill, to look after the welfare of your interesting and precocious little ward. Save for the slight pallor which might suggest the addition of some simple tonic stimulant, such as codliver oil, to the generous fare of the Tophill Academy, I found your little Etta Adelina in every respect —"

Mrs. Filley's name was signed to that report in the same fine Italian hand; and it surprised Mr. Filley very much when he saw it. But there was more surprise ahead for Mr. Filley.

* * *

As a business man Mr. Filley read the paper, but not the local papers of 'Quawket, for it was seldom that the papers were local there long enough to get anybody into the habit of reading them. Thus it came about that he failed to see the notice of the death of old

Mrs. Filley, which occurred in the Old Ladies' Home something less than a twelve-month after the date of his first and only visit. The death occurred, however, but the reports kept on coming in the same fine Italian hand, and with the same generous freedom in language of the most expensive sort. No man could have got more report for fifty dollars than Mr. Filley got, and the report did not begin to be the most of what he was getting.

* * *

Sometimes clergymen but slightly acquainted with the theatrical business are surprised when traveling through small towns to see lithographs and posters displaying the features of great stars of the theatrical and operatic world, who are billed to appear in some local opera house about two sizes larger than a cigar-box. The portraits are familiar, the names under them are not; you may recognize the features of Joe Jefferson and Adelina Patti, with labels on them establish-

ing their identity as "Comical Maginnis, the Monkey Mugger," and "Sadie Sylvester, the Society Clog Artiste." These are what are known as "Stock-printing," and it is pleasant to reflect that the printers who get them up for a fraud on the public rarely are able to collect their bills from the actors and actresses that use them, and that the audiences that go to such shows don't know the difference between Adelina Patti and an oyster patty.

This explanation of an interesting custom is made to forestall the reader's surprise at learning that two years and a half after her retirement from the stage, and ten years, at least, after the retirement of such of her youthful charms as might have justified the exhibition, the portrait of Mrs. Fortescue, arrayed in silk tights, of a most constricted pattern — not constrained at all, simply constricted — decorated scores of fences in what theatrical people call the "'Quawket Circuit," which circuit includes the charming and presumably salubrious shades of Tophill. There was no mistaking Mrs. Fortescue's face; Mrs. Fortescue's attire might have given rise to almost any sort of mistake. The name under the picture was not that of Mrs. Fortescue; it was that of a much advertised young person whose "dramatic speciality" was entitled "Too Much for London; or, Oh, My! Did you Ever!"

* * *

Now it is necessary to disinter old Mrs. Filley for a moment, and to smirch her char-

acter a little by way of introducing some excuse for what Mrs. Fortescue did.

By the time Mrs. Fortescue had cooked her third report, she had found out that the old lady had not quite kept faith with her employer. At the Tophill Institute she had represented herself as Mr. Filley's mother, gaining thereby much consideration and many cups of tea. So that when she died, with the rest of her secret hidden from all but Mrs. Fortescue, the latter lady, having fully made up her mind to appropriate the job, felt that it behooved her to go her predecessor one better, and when she made her appearance at Tophill it was in the character of Mr. Filley's newly married wife. She told the sympathetic all about it, how Mr. Filley and she had known each other from childhood, how he had always

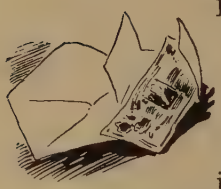
loved her, how she had wedded another to please her family, how the other had died, and Mr. Filley had renewed his addresses, how she had staved him off (I am not quoting her language) until his dear old mother had died, and left him so helpless and lonely that she really had to take pity on him. Mrs. Filley No. 2 got all the consideration she wanted, and the principal sent out for champagne for her, under the impression that that was the daily and hourly drink in all millionaire families. He never found out otherwise from Mrs. Filley, either.

Probably Mrs. Fortescue-Filley had calculated on keeping up her pretty career of imposture until her time of probation at the Home was up, and she could withdraw her entrance fee and vanish at once from 'Quawket and Tophill. She had the report business well in hand; her employer occasionally wrote her for detailed information on minor points of the child's work or personal needs, but in general expressed himself perfectly satisfied; and she felt quite safe, so far as he was concerned, when he commissioned her to put the child through an all-round examination, and sent her fifty dollars extra with his "highest compliments" on her manner of doing it. Indeed, in this she was no humbug. She could have put the principal, himself, through his scholastic facings if she had cared to.

But the appearance of those unholy portraits came without warning, and did their work thoroughly. Even if it had not been that every child in the institute could recognize that well-known countenance, a still more damning disclosure came in the prompt denunciation of the fraud

by the "Indignant Theatre Goer" with a long memory, who wrote to the local paper to protest against the profanation, as he put it, of the features of a peerless Mrs. Fortescue, once an ornament of the stage, and now dwelling in retirement in 'Quawket. Ordinary, common, plain, every-day gossip did the rest.

Mrs. Fortescue saw the posters on her way to Tophill, but she dauntlessly presented herself at the portal. She got no further. The principal interposed himself between her and his shades of innocents, and he addressed that creature of false pretenses in scathing language — or it might have scathed if the good man had not been so angry that he talked falsetto.



It did not look as if there were much in the situation for Mrs. Fortescue, but it would be a strange situation out of which the old lady could not extract just the least little bit of acting. She drew herself up in majestic indignation, hurled the calumnies back at the astonished principal, and with a magnificent threat to bring Mr. Filley right to the spot to utterly overwhelm and confute him, she swept away, leaving the Institute looking two sizes smaller, and its principal looking no particular size at all.

* * * *

And, what is more, she did, for her magnificent dramatic outburst made her fairly acting-drunk. She could not help herself; she was ine-

briated with the exuberance of her own verbosity, to use a once famous phrase, and she simply had to go off on a regular histrionic bat.

She went straight off to the old Filley Manor House at the extreme end of 'Quawket township; she bearded the millionaire builder in his great cool, darkened office, among his mighty plans and elevations and mysterious models, and she told that great man the whole story of her imposture with such a torrent of comic force, with such marvelous mimicry of the plain-spoken Mrs. Filley and the prim principal, and with so humorous an introduction of the champagne episode that her victim lay back in his leather arm-chair, slapped his sturdy leg, roared out mighty peals of laughter, told her she was the most audacious little woman in the whole hemisphere, and that he never heard of anything so funny in his life, and that he 'd call down any number of damn schoolmasters if she wanted him to.

"I don't see how we can arrange a retroactive, Ma'am; I 'm a little too old for that sort of thing, I 'm afraid. But I 'll tell you what I can do. I 'll send my agent at once to take the child out of school, and I 'll see that my man does n't give him any satisfaction or a chance for explanation.

"Why, damn it!" concluded the hearty Mr. Filley; "if I ever see the little prig I 'll tell him I think it is a monstrous and great condescension on your part to let yourself be known as the wife of a plain old fellow like me. Why does n't a man know a handsome woman when he sees her?"

"Then I am forgiven for all my wicked-

ness?" said Mrs. Fortescue — but, oh! *how* she said it!

"Forgiveness?" repeated Mr. Filley, thoughtfully. "Yes; I think so." Then he rose, crossed the room to a large safe, in which he opened a small drawer. From this he took a small package of papers which he placed in Mrs. Fortes-

cue's hands. She recognized her own reports, and also a curious scrawl on a crumpled and discolored piece of paper, which also she promptly recognized. It was a "screw" that had held three cents' worth of snuff, and she had seen it in Mrs. Filley's hand just about the time that dear old lady was passing away. She read it now for the first time:

"dere mr Filley i kno that fort escew woman is gone to kepon senden them re ports an nottel you ime dedd but iam Sara Filley."

"She sent that to me," said Mr. Filley, "by Doctor Butts, the house physician, and between us we managed to get a 'line' on you, Mrs. Fortescue; so that there 's been a little duplicity on both sides."

Mrs. Fortescue looked at him with admiration mingled with respect; then she looked puzzled.

"But why, if you knew it all along, why did you —"

"Why did I let you go on?" repeated Mr.

Filley. "Well, you 've got to have the whole duplicity, I see." He went back to the drawer and took out another object. It was a faded photograph of a young lady with her hair done up in a net, and with a hat like a soap-dish standing straight up on her head.

"Twenty-five years ago," said Mr. Filley, "boy; three dollars a week in an architect's office; spent two-fifty of them, two weeks running, for flowers for that young lady when she played her first engagement in New Haven. Walked there. Paid the other fifty cents to get into the theatre. Lived on apples the rest of the week. Every boy does it. Never forgets it. Place always remains soft."

And, as Mrs. Fortescue sat and looked long and earnestly at the picture, a soft color came into her face that was born rather of memory than of her love for acting; and yet it wonderfully simulated youth and fresh beauty and a young joy in life.

"THE MAN WITH THE PINK PANTS."

"THE MAN WITH THE PINK PANTS."

HIS is a tale of pitiless and persistent vengeance, and it shows by what simple means a very small and unimportant person may bring about the undoing of the rich, great and influential. It was told to me by my good friend, the Doctor, as we strolled through the pleasant suburbs of a pretty little city that is day by day growing into greatness and ugliness, as what they call a manufacturing centre.

We had been watching the curious antics of a large man who would have attracted attention at any time on account of his size, his luxuriant hair and whiskers, and the strange condition of the costly clothing he wore — a frock-coat and trousers of the extremest fashion, a rolling white waist-coat, gray-spatted patent-leathers, and a silk hat. But all these fine articles of apparel were much soiled in places, his coat-collar was half turned up, the hat had met with various mishaps, his shoes were scratched and dusty, his cravat ill-tied, and altogether his appearance suggested a puzzling combination of prosperity and hard luck. His doings were stranger than his looks. He tacked cautiously

from side to side of the way, peered up a cross-street here; went slowly and cautiously up another for a few yards, only to return and to efface himself for a moment behind a tree or in a doorway.

Suddenly he gave signs of having caught sight of somebody far up a narrow lane. Promptly bolting into the nearest front yard, he got behind the syringa bush and waited patiently until another man, smaller, but much more active, hurried sharply down the lane, glancing suspiciously around. This second person missed seeing the big man, and after waiting irresolutely a moment or two, he hailed a street-car going toward the town. At the same time another car passed him going in the opposite direction. With incredible agility, the large man darted from behind the syringa bush and made the second car in the brief second the little man's back was turned. Swinging himself inside, the figures on the rear platform promptly concealed him from view, and as he was whirled past us we could distinctly hear him emit a tremendous sigh or puff of profound relief.

"You don't know him?" said the Doctor, smiling. "Yes, you do; at least, you have seen him before; and I will show you him in his likeness as you saw him two little years ago.

"Such as you see that man to-day," con-

tinued the Doctor, as we strolled toward the town, "he is entirely the creation of one small and insignificant man; not the man you just saw watching for him, but another so very insignificant that his name even is forgotten by the few who have heard it. I alone remember his face. Nobody knows anything else that throws light on his identity, except the fact that he was on one occasion addressed as 'Mr. Thingumajig,' and that he is or was a writer for the press, in no very great way of business. Now let us turn down Main Street, and I will show you the man he reduced to the ignominious object we have just been watching."

We soon stopped at a photograph gallery, and the Doctor led me, in a way that showed that his errand was not a rare one, to a little room in the rear, where, on a purple velvet background, hung a nearly life-size crayon portrait. It represented a large gentleman — the large gentleman whom we had just seen — attired in much similar garments, only that in the picture his neatness was spotless and perfect. Not a wrinkle, not a stain marred him from top to toe. He stood in the graceful and dignified attitude of one who has been set up by his fellow-citizens to be looked at and admired, and who knows that his fellow-citizens are only doing the right thing by him. His silk hat was jauntily poised upon his hip, and the smile that illuminated his moustache and whiskers was at once genial, encouraging, condescending, and full of deep religious and political feeling. It was hardly necessary to look

at the superb gilt inscription below to know that that portrait was "Presented by the Vestry of St. Dives Church, on the Occasion of his Retirement from their Body to Assume the Burden of Civic Duties in the Assembly of the State that Counts Him Among her Proudest Ornaments."

"Mr. Silo!" cried I.

"Mr. Silo," said the Doctor; "but he did not go to the Assembly, and that picture has never been presented. When you saw him to-day he was running away from his brother-in-law, to get to New York to go on any sort of a spree to drown his misery. Come along, and you shall hear the tale of a fallen idol. And if, as you listen, an ant should cross your

path, do not step on it. Mr. Silo stepped upon an ant, and the ant made of him the thing you saw."

I do not tell this story exactly in the Doctor's own words, though I will let it look as if I did. The trouble of letting non-literary people tell stories in their own language is that the "says I's," and the "says he's," and the "well, this man" passages, and "then this other man I was telling you about" interpolations take up so much of the narrative that a story like this could not be read while a pound of candles burned.

But here is about the way the Doctor ought to have told it:

I do not wish to undervaluate the good influence of Mr. Silo in our city. He has been a large and enterprising investor. He has built up the town in many ways. He has been charitable and patriotic. He was a good man; but he was not a saint. And a man has to be a saint to boom town lots and keep straight. No; I 'll go further than that — it can't be done! George Washington could n't have boomed town lots and kept straight. And Silo, as you can see by those whiskers, was no George Washington. Real estate is n't sold on the Golden Rule, you know. There were times when it was mighty lucky for Silo that he was six feet high and weighed two hundred pounds.

I don't know the details of the transaction, but I am afraid that Silo treated the little newspaper man pretty shabbily. He was a decent, hard-working, unobtrusive little fellow, and he and his wife had been scraping and

saving for years and years to buy a house with a garden to it, in just such a town as this. Well, no, that 's not the way to put it. They had fixed on a particular house in this particular town, and they had been waiting several years for the lease of it to fall in. They were ready with the price, and I do not doubt that Silo or his agents had at one time accepted their offer for the place. But when the time came, Silo backed out, refused to sell, and disowned the whole transaction.

That, in itself, was a mean act. It was a trifling matter to Silo, but it was a biggest kind

of matter to the other man and his wife. They had set their hearts on that particular house; they had stinted themselves for a long, long time to lay up the money to buy it; and probably no other house in the whole world could ever be so desirable to those two people. But that was n't the worst of it. The man might have put up with his disappointment, and perhaps even have forgiven Silo for the shabby trick. But Silo, I suppose, felt ashamed of

himself and went further than he had meant to, in trying to lash himself into a real good, honest indignation. At least, that is my guess at it; for Silo was neither brutal nor stupid by nature; but on this occasion he had the incredible cussedness to twit the little man on his helplessness. It was purely a question of veracity between the two, and Silo pointed out that, as against him, nobody would take the stranger's word. That was true; but, good Lord! Silo himself told me subsequently that it was the meanest thing, under the circumstances, that he ever heard one man say to another. He always maintained that he was right about the sale; but he admitted that his roughing of the poor fellow was inexcusable; and the thing that graveled him most and frightened him most in the end was that he had called the poor man "Mr. Thingumajig." He had not caught the real name; he only remembered that it had some sort of a foreign sound that suggested "Thingumajig" to his mind.

Now, all that Silo had had before him previous to that outburst was only a plain case of angry man; but from that time on he had ahead of him through his pathway in life an incarnation of human hatred, out for vengeance, and bound to have it.

"Well, now the fun of the thing comes in," said the Doctor.

"I should think it was high time," said I.

* * *

There was nothing very unusual in that little episode; but somehow it got public, and

was a good deal talked about; although, as I said, hardly anybody knew the stranger, even by name. But, of course, it was well nigh forgotten six months later, when the newspaper man came to the front again.

His reappearance took the form of such a singular exhibition of meekness that it ought to have made Silo suspicious, to say the least. But he was a bit of a bully; and, like all bullies, it was hard for him to believe that a man who did not bluster could really mean fight. Perhaps he had no chance of mercy at that time; but if he did he threw it away.

The stranger wrote to the local paper a polite, even modest letter, stating, very moderately, his grievance against Mr. Silo. He further proposed a scheme, the adoption of which would obviate all possibilities of such misunderstanding. I have forgotten what the scheme was. It was not a good one, and I know now that it was not meant to be. The local paper was the *Echo*. It was run by a shiftless young man named Meecham; and, of course, Silo had him deep in his debt; and, of course, again, Silo more or less ran the paper. So, when that letter arrived, Meecham showed it to Silo, and Silo gave new cause of offense by violating the honorable laws of newspaper controversy, and answering back in the very same number of the paper. The matter of his reply was also injudicious. He lost his temper at once when he saw that the letter was signed "Mr. Thingumajig," and he characterized both the plan and its proposer as "preposterous." I am inclined to think that

that word "preposterous" was just the word that the other man was setting a trap for. At any rate, he got it, and he wanted nothing better. Here is his reply:

AN OPEN LETTER TO P. Q. SILO, ESQ.

MY DEAR MR. SILO:

I greatly regret that my little scheme for the simplification of the relations between intending purchasers and non-intending sellers (so-called) of real estate should have fallen under your disapprobation. Of course, I do not attempt to question your judgement; but you must allow me to take exception to the language in which that judgement is expressed; which is at once inappropriate and insulting. You call me and my scheme "preposterous;" and this shows that you

do not know the meaning of that frequently misused word. "Preposterous" is a word that may be properly applied to a scheme that puts the cart before the horse — "having that first which ought to be last," as Mr. Webster's International Dictionary puts it — or to a thing or creature "contrary to nature or reason; not adapted to the end; utterly and glaringly foolish; unreasonably absurd; perverted." If you want an instance of its proper application, the word "preposterous" might fitly be used in all its senses to describe your own brief but startling appearance on Thursday evening last, between the hours of nine and ten, in a certain quiet street of New York, in a pair of pink pants.

I remain, dear sir,

Yours very truly,

MR. THINGUMAJIG.

That was all. Nothing more. But, as the lineman said of the two-thousand volt shock, "it is n't necessary to see some things to know that they 're there."

Now I want you to note the devilish ingenuity of that phraseology. To speak of "pink trousers" would serve only to call up an unattractive mental picture. "Pink breeches" would only suggest the satin knee-breeches of a page in a comic opera; but "pink pants" is a combination you can't get out of your head. It is not English; the word "pants" is a vulgar contraction of the word pantaloons, and we don't wear pantaloons in these days. But "pants" is the funniest word of its size that ever was invented, and it is just about the

right word for the hideous garment it belongs to. And whether there 's any reason or logic in it or not, when I put those two little cheap words together and say "pink pants," I am certain of two things. First, you have got to smile; second, you can't forget it to save your neck. And that 's what Mr. Thingumajig knew. I think he had everything laid out in his mind just as it was going to happen.

Meecham got that letter, and laid it aside to show to Silo; but as he sat at his desk and worked, the salient phrase kept bobbing around in his mind; and, finally, he said aloud:

"Pink pants! What in thunder are pink pants, anyway?"

His foreman heard him, and looked at him in amazement.

"Pink pants," he repeated; that 's a new one on me."

Meecham picked up the letter again, and knit his brows as he studied it.

"That 's right," he said; "that 's what it is."

The foreman came and looked over his shoulder.

"'Pink pants,'" he repeated; "that 's right."

A man who had just come into the office looked at the two speakers with astonishment. Meecham knew that he had come to put an advertisement in the paper, and so he showed him the letter.

"Well, I 'm damned!" he said. "That 's right, though. It 's 'pink pants,' on your life. But where in blazes would a man get pink pants, anyway?"

When Mr. Silo saw the letter he told Mee-

cham to "burke" it; and Meecham put it in the waste-basket. The next day Silo made him take it out of the waste-basket and print it. He explained that so many people had asked him about the letter — and he said something to Meecham as to his methods of running the office — that he thought it better to print it and let the people see for themselves how absurd it was, or else they might magnify it and think he was afraid to print it. Meecham did not say anything at the moment. He did not like being blown up any more than the rest of us do, however; and, when he had got the letter safely printed and out before the public, he said to Silo:

"You did just right about that letter. It would n't have done for a man of your position to have folks going around asking where you were on any particular Thursday evening."

"Why, no!" said Silo; "of course it would

n't. Lemme see; was that the day the infernal crank picked out?"

"Thursday night, the eleventh," said Meecham, his finger on the calendar; "between nine and ten o'clock at night. Now, of course, Mr. Silo, you know just where you were then."

"Why, of course!" said Silo. "Lemme see, now. Thursday the eleventh, nine, ten at night. Why, I was — no — why, *Thursday, the eleventh!* — Oh, thunder! — no — it can't be! Oh, certainly! yes; that 's all right, of course! Is that Mr. Smith over there, the other side of the street? I 've got to speak to him a minute. I 'll see you to-morrow. Good-night, my boy!"

* * *

How much of an expert in human nature are you? If I tell you that Mr. Silo insisted on having every first impression of an edition of the *Echo* sent to his house by special messenger the instant it was printed, whether he was at home or not, and that he did this just to make Meecham feel the bitterness of the servitude of debt, what do you deduce or infer from that? That somebody else was tyrannizing over Silo? Quite right! Mrs. Silo was a woman who opened all of her husband's letters — that came to the house. And she looked at Silo's paper before he saw it himself.

And when Silo got home that day, Mrs. Silo was waiting for him. Mrs. Silo and the copy of the *Echo*, with the letter concerning Mr. Silo and the pink pants. Mrs. Silo wanted to know about it. If Mr. Silo was in any doubt about

Thursday night, the eleventh, Mrs. Silo was not. On that night Mr. Silo had been expected out on the train leaving New York at eight o'clock. He had arrived on the train leaving New York at ten o'clock. There was no trouble at all in identifying the night. Mrs. Silo reminded him that it was the night of the day when he took in a certain hank of red Berlin wool to be delivered to Mrs. Silo's mother, who lived in 14th Street; which, as Mrs. Silo remarked, is not a quiet street. She also reminded Mr. Silo that on his appearance that evening she had asked him if he had delivered that hank of red Berlin wool at the house of his mother-in-law, and he had answered that he had; that his lateness was due to that cause; and, furthermore, that his dear mother-in-law was very well.

To this Mr. Silo responded that his statements on Thursday evening were perfectly correct.

Then Mrs. Silo told him that since the arrival of the paper she had made a trip to New York to inform herself as to the true condition of affairs. And, furthermore, on Thursday the eleventh, Mrs. Silo's mother had been confined to her bed all day with a severe neuralgic head-

ache, all the other members of the family being absent at the bedside of a sick relative; the cook had had a day off, and the aged waitress, who had been in the family twenty-five years, was certain that no one had entered the house up to the return of the absent members at eight, sharp, when, the sick relative being by that time a dead relative, the house was closed. So much for furthermore. Now, moreover, the hank of red Berlin wool had arrived at the house in Fourteenth Street four days after the date in

question. It came through the United States mail, wrapped up in a sheet of tinted note-paper, scented with musk, and addressed in a sprawling but unmistakably feminine hand.

Mr. Silo made an explanation. It was unsatisfactory.

* * * *

It had long been known in the town that suspicion was rife in the Silo household. It was now known that suspicion had ripened into certainty. Events of that kind belong to what may be classed as the masculine or strictly necessary and self-protective scandal. News of the event goes in hushed whispers through the masculine community — the brotherhood of man, as you might say. One man says to his neighbor, "Let 's get Johnston and go down to Coney Island this afternoon." "Johnston is n't going down to Coney Island this week," says the neighbor. "Johnston miscalculated his wine last night, and Mrs. Johnston is good people to leave alone this morning."

In a case so much more serious than a mere case of intoxication as Silo's was supposed to be, you can readily understand that the scandal of the pink pants spread through the town like wildfire. Silo had already resigned from the vestry, so all the vestry could do was to pitch in and see that he did not get the ghost of a show as a candidate for assembly. It was not much of a job, under the circumstances, and the vestry did it very easily.

* * * *

"Well, but what *had* Silo done?" I asked the Doctor. "And what were the pink pants, anyway?"

"Silo had n't done a thing," replied the Doctor. "Not a blessed thing — except to tell a tiny little bit of a two-for-one-cent fib about that hank of worsted. I met Mr. Thingumajig in

Chicago last year, and he told me how he worked the whole scheme. The gist of the invention lay in the 'pink pants.' Any fool can put up a job to make a man's wife jealous; but it takes the genius of deathless malevolence to invent a phrase sure to catch every ear that hears it; sure to interest and puzzle and excite every mind that gives it lodgment, and to tie that phrase up to an individuality in such a way that it conveys an accusation almost without form and void, and yet hideously suggestive of iniquity.

"That is just what the little newspaper cuss did with Silo. He was bent on revenge, and he gave up a certain portion of his time to shadowing him. You must remember that, while he had reason to remember Silo, Silo had hardly any to remember him. Well, he told me that he dogged Silo for days — months, even — trying to catch him in some wrong-doing. But Silo, big and blustering as he looked, with his whiskers and his knowing air, was an innocent, respectable, henpecked ass. Outside of business, all that he ever did in New York was to go to his mother-in-law's house at his wife's bidding to execute shopping commissions and the like. For instance, this hank of Berlin wool the old lady had bought for her daughter; the shade was wrong, and the daughter sent it back. Mr. Thingumajig — never mind his name now — had been tracking Silo on his trips to Fourteenth Street for weeks, and had just learned their innocent nature. His soul was full of rage. He got into a green car with Silo, going to the ferry. The evening was hot. Silo dozed in the corner of the car. The hank of red Berlin wool lay on

the seat beside him. Mr. Thingumajig saw it, and saw the letter pinned to it, addressed by Mrs. Silo to her mother. In that instant he conceived the crude basis of his plot — to appropriate the hank, suppress the letter, souse the wool with cheap perfume, get his wife to readdress the parcel in her worst hand — and to rely in pretty good confidence on Silo's telling a lie at one end or both ends of the line about the missing wool. Silo was not much of a sinner, but a man who loses his wife's hank of Berlin wool and goes home and owns up about it is a good deal of a saint. The chances were all in Mr. Thingumajig's favor."

* * *

"But," said I, "when you had met Mr. Thingumajig and became possessed of the plot, why did n't you come back here and tell all about it, and clear up poor Silo?"

The Doctor looked at me pityingly, almost contemptuously.

"My dear fellow," he said, as if he were talking to a child, "what was my word to those pink pants? I tried it on, until I found that people simply began to suspect me, and to think that I might be Silo's accomplice in iniquity. There

was n't the least use in it. If I talked to a man, he would hear me through; and then he would wag his head and say, 'That 's all very well; but how about those pink pants? If there were n't any pink pants how did they come to be mentioned?' And that was the way everywhere. I could explain all about poor Silo's foolish little lie, and they would say, 'Oh, yes, that 's possible; a man might lie about a hank of wool if he had the kind of wife Silo 's got; but how about those pink pants?' And when it was n't *those* pink pants, it was *them* pink pants. And after a while I gave it up. Silo had got to drinking pretty hard by that time, in order to drown his miseries; and of course that only confirmed the earlier scandal. Now, Silo never was a man that could drink; it never did agree with him, and he has got so wild recently that Mrs. Silo has her two brothers take turns to come out here and try to control him. Of course that makes him all the wilder."

At the end of Main Street I parted from my friend, the Doctor, and shortly I crossed the pathway of another citizen who had seen the two of us bidding good-by.

"He 's a nice man, the Doctor is," said the citizen; "but the trouble with him is, he 's altogether too credulous and sympathetic. Now, I would n't be surprised if he 'd been making some defense to you of the goings on of that man Silo. He 's a sort of addled on that subject. May be it 's just pure charity, of course; and may be, equally, he was in with Silo when Silo was n't so openly disgraceful; but if you want to know what that man Silo is, I 'll tell you. The people around here, sir—the people

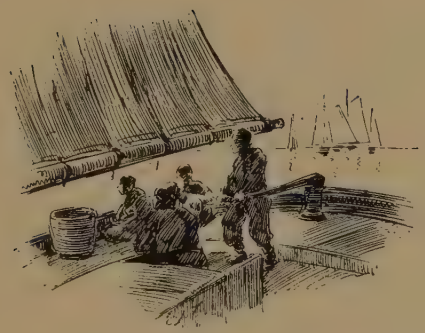
who ought to know — do you know what they call him, sir? Well, sir, they call him, 'The Man with the Pink Pants.' And do you suppose for one minute, sir, that a man gets a name fixed on him like that without he 's deserved it? No, sir; your friend there is a good man, and a charitable man, but as for judgement of character, he ain't got it. And if you 're a friend of his, you 'll tell him that the less he has to say about 'The Man with the Pink Pants' — the better for *him*."

THE THIRD FIGURE IN THE COTILLION.

THE THIRD FIGURE IN THE COTILLION.

ROUND the little island of Ausserland the fishing-smacks hover all through the season. They rarely go out of sight; or, indeed, stand far off shore, for life is easy in Ausserland, and the famous Ausserland herrings, which give the island its prosperity, are oftenest to be caught in the broad reaches of shallow water that surround the island. Beyond these reaches there are fish, too; but out there the waters are more turbulent. And why should a fisherman risk his life and his beautiful brown duck sails in treacherous seas, when he has his herring-pond at his own door-step, so to speak. And they have a saying in Ausserland that if you are drowned you may go to heaven; but certainly not to Ausserland.

And who would want to leave Ausserland? Life is so easy there that it takes most of the inhabitants about ninety years to die—and even then you can hardly call it dying. Life's pendulum only slows down day by day, and swings through an arc that imperceptibly diminishes as



the years go on, until at last, without surprise, without shock, almost without regret, so gradual is the process, you perceive that it has stopped. And then the whole village, all in Sunday clothes, marches out to the little graveyard on the hill, and somebody's great birchen beer-mug is hung on the living-room wall in memory of one who ate and drank and slept, and who is no more. There are rooms in those old houses in Ausserland where the wooden mugs hang in a double row, and the oldest of them was last touched by living lips in days when the dragon-ships of the Vikings ploughed that Northern sea.

Ausserland is a principality, and a part of a mighty empire; but except that it has to pay its taxes, and in return is guaranteed immunity from foreign invasion, it might just as well be an independent kingdom; or, rather, an independent state, for it is governed by Burgesses, elected by the people to administer laws made hundreds of years ago, and still quite good and suitable. If a man steals his neighbor's goods, he is put in the pillory. But what should a

man steal his neighbor's goods for when he has all the goods that he wants of his own? The last time the pillory was used was for a ship-wrecked Spanish sailor who refused to go to church on the ground of a rooted prejudice against the Protestant religion. And it must have been a singularly comfortable pillory, for somehow or other he managed to carve his name on it during the hour in which he stood there — his name and the date of the event, and there they are to this day: "Miguel Diaz jul 6 1743." My own opinion is that they did not even let the top-piece down on him.

The men of Ausserland are not liable to conscription, and as no ships of war ever come to their odd corner of the sea, they know no more of the mighty struggles of their great empire than if they were half a world away. This is a part of the beautiful understanding which the Ausserlanders have established with their hereditary Prince and with the imperial government. The Prince lives at the court of the Emperor, and none of his line has seen Ausserland since his grandfather was there in the last century for a day's visit. Yet his relations with his subjects are of a permanently pleasant nature. They pay him his taxes, of which he hands over the lion's share to the government, keeping enough for himself to attire his plump person in beautiful uniforms and tight cavalry boots, and to cultivate the most beautiful port-wine nose in the whole court. The amount of the taxes has been settled long ago, and it is always exactly the same. The Ausserland fishermen are like a sort of deep-sea Dutchmen,

independent, sturdy and shrewd. They know just how much they ought to pay; and they pay it, and not one soumarkee more or less. Ages ago the hereditary Princes discovered that if they put up the tax-rate, the herring fisheries promptly failed just in the necessary proportion to bring the assessment back to the old figure. When they lowered the rate the accommodating herring came back. It was a curious if not pleasing freak of nature to which they had to accustom themselves, for it never would have done to leave the market open to any other supply of herrings than the famous herrings of Ausserland. So that question settled itself.

Twice a year the finest of the broad-breasted fishing smacks sailed for the distant mainland, bearing heavy cargoes of dried fish, and beautiful seashells such as were to be found nowhere else. Twice a year they came back, bringing cloths and calicos, always of the same quality, color and pattern, for the fashions never change in Ausserland. They brought also drugs and medicines, school-books and pipes, tools and household utensils of the finer sort, more delicate than the Ausserland ironsmiths could fashion; brandy and cordials and wine in casks great and small, and the few other articles of commerce for which they were dependent upon the outer world; for the Ausserlanders supplied their own needs for the most part, spun their own linen, tanned their own leather, built their own boats,

and generally "did" for themselves, as they say in New England. Then it was, and then only, that the newspapers came to Ausserland — a six-months' collection of newspapers at each trip. And the Head Burgess read them for the whole town. The Head Burgess was always a man who had reached that period of thrift and prosperity at which it seemed futile to toil longer, and who was both willing and able to give his whole leisure to affairs of state. He it was who collected and forwarded the taxes, and who stood ready to punish offenders, should any one feel tempted to offend. The Head Burgess always grumbled a good deal, and talked much of the burdens of public life; but it was observant among even the unobservant Ausserlanders that the Head Burgess was usually the fattest man in town; and the post was much sought after because few Head Burgesses had been known to die under ninety-two or three years of age.

As a rule, the Head Burgess read slowly and with deliberation. Of a June afternoon, when the fishermen came in from their day's work, he would stroll leisurely down to the wharves, with his long pipe with the painted china bowl, and would give forth the news of the day to the fishermen.

"Three families," he would say, "were frozen to death in Hamburg."

"Ah, indeed!" some courteous listener would respond; "and when was that?"

"In February last," the Head Burgess would reply; "it seems scandalous, does it not, that people should never learn to go in-doors and keep the fires lighted in Winter? Thank heaven, we have no such idiots here!"

For an Ausserlander can never understand what it means to be poor or needy. How can anybody want, he argues, while there are millions of herring in the sea, and they come along every year just at the same time?

In Spring, of course, the Head Burgess gave the Ausserlanders a budget of news that began with the preceding Summer. They listened to it politely, as they listened to the pastor's sermons. Outside of the market-reports they had little interest in the world which ate their herrings. Still, they were a polite and intelligent people, and they were willing for once in a way to lend a courteous and attentive ear to the doings and sayings of people who were not happy enough to live in Ausserland. Thus it happened that they knew, several months after it occurred, of the death of the reigning Emperor and the accession to the throne of his son. The news was received with just the least shade of disapproval. The preceding Emperor had come to the throne a sick man, and had reigned but a short time. *His* father had reigned about as long as an Emperor can possibly reign, and they felt that he had done what was expected of him. They hoped that their Emperors were not going to get into the habit of reigning for a few months and then dying. It was annoying, they thought, to have to learn new names every few years.

So it is not remarkable that the new Emperor had been several months on his throne before the good people of Ausserland learned that he was a very peculiar young man, with a character of his own, and with a passion, that almost amounted to a mania, for re-establishing an ancient order of things that had well-nigh perished from the face of the earth. Nor is it to be wondered at that, considering all news of the court as frivolous and probably fictitious, they were utterly ignorant of a controversy that had divided the whole social system of the empire into two camps. Who could expect that in the cosy, well-furnished rooms of the weather-beaten old houses of Ausserland it should be known that there was a vast commotion in the Imperial court over the new cotillion introduced by the Lord Chamberlain? It was a charming cotillion, all agreed; the music was ravishing, and the figures were exquisitely original; but the third figure — ah, there was the trouble! — the third figure had not met with the approval of the matrons. The young girls and the very young married women all liked it; and the men were as a unit in its favor; but the more elderly ladies thought that it was indelicate, and that it afforded opportunities for objectionable familiarities. A hot war was raged between the two parties. The Emperor, of course, was arbiter. He hesitated long. He was a very young man, and he took himself very much in earnest. To him a matter of court punctilio had an importance scarcely second to that of the fate of nations. As soon as an objection was offered, he issued an edict proscribing the performance of

the dance of dubious propriety until such time as he should have made up his imperial mind as to its character. For three months its fate trembled in the balance. Then he decided that it should be and continue to be; and he issued a formal proclamation to that effect — the first formal proclamation of his reign. It was an opportunity for the re-introduction of ancient and ancestral methods which the young Emperor could not lose. The edict had gone forth in haste by word of mouth and by notice in the daily papers; but he resolved that the proclamation should go by special envoy to all the principalities that composed his powerful empire. Accordingly, an officer of high rank, specially despatched from the court, read his Imperial Majesty's proclamation in every principality of the nation; and thereafter it was legitimate and proper to dance the third figure of the new Lord Chamberlain's cotillion on all occasions of lordly festivities, and all the elderly ladies accepted the situation with a cheerful submissive-

ness, and set about using it for scandal-mongering purposes with promptitude and alacrity.

* * *

Early one Midsummer morning a strange fishing-smack was sighted from the Ausserland wharves far out at sea, beating up against an obstinate wind, and coming from the direction of the mainland. This in itself was enough to cause general comment and to stir the whole village with a thrill of interest; for strange vessels rarely came that way, except under stress of storm; and though the sea was running unusually high there had been no storm in many days. Besides, why should a vessel obviously unfitted for that sort of sailing, beat up against a wind that would take her to the mainland in half the time? Yet there she was, making for the island in long, laborious tacks. Everybody stopped work to look at her; but work was suspended and utterly thrown aside when she hoisted a pennant that, according to the nautical code, signified that she had on board an Envoy from his Imperial Majesty.

The whole town was astir in a moment. The shops and schools closed. The village band began to practice as it had never practiced before. The burgesses and other officials donned their garments of state. A committee was promptly appointed to prepare a public banquet worthy of the Emperor's messenger. The children were sent collecting flowers, and were instructed how to strew them in his path. The bell-ringers gathered and arranged an elabo-

rate programme of chimes. The citizens got into their Sunday clothes, which were most wonderful clothes in their way; and the town-crier, who played the trumpet, got his instrument out and polished it up until it shone like gold. But the man who felt most of the burden of responsibility upon his shoulders was the Head Burgess. He got into his robes of office as quickly as his wife and his three daughters could array him, and then he hastened to the Rathhaus, or Town Hall, and there consulted the archives to find out from the records of his predecessors what it became him to do when his Majesty's Envoy should announce his

errand. He must make a speech, that was clear, for the honor of the Island. But what speech should he make? He could not compose one on the instant — in fact, he could not compose one at all. What had his forerunners done on like occasions? He looked over the record and found that three King's Envoys had landed on the Island: one in 1699, to announce that the Island had been ceded by one kingdom to another; another in 1764, to inform the people that the great-grandmother of the hereditary Prince was dead; and another in 1848, to proclaim that the Islanders' right of exemption from conscription was suspended. In not one of these cases, it should be remarked, did the message of King, Prince or Emperor, change the face of affairs on the Island in the smallest degree. The herring market remaining stable, the Ausserlanders cared no whit to whom they paid taxes; as to the death of the Prince's great-grandmother, they simply remarked that it was a pity to die at the early age of eighty-seven; and when they were told that they would have to get up a draft and be conscripted into the army or navy, they just went fishing, and there the matter dropped. One is not an Ausserlander for nothing.

But the Head Burgess found that the same speech had been used on all three occasions. It was short, and he had little difficulty in committing it to memory, for it took the ship of his Majesty's Envoy six good hours to get into port. This was the speech:

"Noble and Honorable, Well and High-Born Sir, the people of Ausserland desire through

their representative, the Head Burgess, to affirm their unwavering loyalty to the most illustrious and high-born personage who condescends to assume the government of a loyal and independent populace, and to express the hope that Divine Providence may endow him with such power and capacity as properly befit a so-situated ruler."

So heartily did the whole population throw itself into the work of preparing to receive the distinguished visitor, that everything had been in readiness a full hour, when, in the early afternoon, the fishing-smack finally made her landing. During this long hour, the whole town watched the struggles of the little boat with the baffling wind and waves. Everybody was in a state of delighted expectancy. An Emperor's Envoy does not call on one every day, and his coming offered an excuse for merry-making such as the prosperous and easy-going people of Ausserland were only too willing to seize.

So, when the boat made fast to the wharf, the signal guns boomed, and the people cheered again and again, and threw their caps in the air when the King's Envoy appeared from the cabin and returned the salute of the Head Burgess.

And, indeed, the King's Envoy was a most satisfactory and gratifying spectacle of grandeur. He was so grand and so gorgeous generally that he might have been taken for the hereditary Prince, himself, had it not been well known that the color of the hereditary Prince's nose was unchangeable — being what the ladies call a fast red — whereas, this gentleman's face was as white as the Head Burgess's frilled shirt-front,

But his clothes! So splendid a uniform was never seen before. Some of it was of cobalt blue and some of it of Prussian blue, and some of it of white; and, all over, in every possible place, it was decorated with a gold lace and gold buttons and silken frogs and tassels, and every other device of beauty that ingenuity could suggest, with complete disregard of cost.

And then His Serene Highness, Herr Graf Maximilian von Bummelberg, of Schloss Bummelfels in the Schwarzwald, stepped on the wharf and graciously introduced himself to the representative of the people, who grasped him warmly by the hand with a cordiality untempered by

awe; and the people shouted again as they saw the two great men together; and not one suspected the anguish hidden by that martial outside. For, of course, as such things will happen, the Envoy selected to carry the Emperor's proclamation to this marine principality was a man who had never been to sea in his life, and who never would have made a sailor if he had been kept at sea until he was pickled. And for eighteen hours the unfortunate messenger of good tidings had been tossed about in the dark, close, malodorous little cabin of a fishing-smack on the breast of a chopping sea, beating up against a strong head wind. And, oh! had he not been sick? Sick, sick, sick, and then again sick — so sick, indeed, that he had had to hide his gorgeous clothes under a sailor's dirty tarpaulin. This made him feel sicker yet; but, though in the course of the trip he lost his respect for mankind, including himself, for royalty, for religion, for life and for death, he still retained a vital spark of respect for his beautiful clothes. He stood motionless upon the wharf and returned the compliments of the Head Burgess in a husky voice that sounded in his own ears strange and far off. The Herr Graf Maximilian von Bummelberg, of Schloss Bummelfels in the Schwarzwald, Envoy of his Imperial Majesty, was waiting for the ground to steady itself, for it was behaving as it had never behaved before, to his knowledge. It rolled and it heaved, it flew up and it nearly hit him in the face, then it slipped away from under him and rocked back again sidewise. Never having been on an island before, the King's Envoy might have thought that

the land was really afloat if he had not seen that the wine in the silver cup which the Burgess was presenting to him was swinging around like everything else without spilling a drop.

Things began to settle a little after the Envoy had drunk the wine, and when he had found that there was actually a carriage to take him to the Town Hall, he brightened up wonderfully. He was much pleased to see also that the Town Hall was solidly built of brick, and that it was to a stone balcony that he was led to read his proclamation to the people. Grasping the balustrade firmly with one hand, he read to the surging crowd before him—he had heard of surging crowds before, but now he saw one that really did surge — the message of his Imperial Master. The proclamation was exceedingly brief, except for the recital of the titles of the Emperor. The body of the document ran as follows:

"I announce to my faithful, loyal and devoted subjects of the honorable principality of Ausserland, that hereafter, by my favor and pleasure, the use of the Third Figure in the Cotillion is graciously granted to them without further restriction. Done, under my hand and seal, this first day of July, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and ninety-two."

That was all. The people listened attentively and cheered enthusiastically. Then the Envoy handed the proclamation and his credentials to the Head Burgess, with a bow and a flourish, and signified his intention of returning at once by the way he had come. Nor could any entreaties prevail upon him even to stay to

the banquet already spread. He told the Burgesses, with many compliments and assurances of his lofty esteem, that he had another principality to notify before six o'clock the next morning, and that the business of his Imperial Master admitted of not so much as a moment's delay. The truth of the matter, however, he kept to himself. For one thing, he could not have gazed upon food without disastrous results. For another, he was experiencing an emotion which in any other than a military breast would have been fear. He had but one wish in the world, and that was to get back to the mainland, the breeze being in his favor going back and promising a quicker passage. Indeed it was with difficulty that he repressed a mad desire to ask the Head Burgess whether the island ever fetched loose and floated further out, or sank to the bottom. However, he maintained his dig-

nity to the last; and, a half an hour later, as the people watched the fishing-smack with the Imperial ensign sail forth upon the dancing sea, bearing the Herr Graf Maximilian von Bummelberg, of Schloss Bummelfels in the Schwarzwald, they all agreed that, for a short visit, he made a very satisfactory King's Envoy.

But they could banquet very well without assistance from Envoys or anybody, and they sat them down in the great hall of the Rathhaus, and they fell upon the smoked herring and the fresh herring, and the pickled herring, and the smoked goose-breast and the potato salad, and all the rest of the good things, and they drank great tankards of home-made beer, and great flagons of imported Rhenish wine; and, after that, they smoked long pipes and chatted contentedly, mainly about the herring-market.

They had reached this stage in the proceedings before it occurred to any one in the company to broach the comparatively uninteresting subject of the Imperial proclamation, and then somebody said in a casual way that he did not think he had quite caught the sense of it. Soon it appeared that no one else had. The Head Burgess was puzzled. "I have just copied it into the Town Archives," he said; "but, upon my soul, I never thought of considering the sense of it." So the document was taken from the ponderous safe of the Rathhaus and passed around among the goodly company, each one of whom read it slowly through and smoked solemnly over it. The Head Burgess was appealed to for the meaning of the word "cotillion." He had to confess that he did not exactly know. He believed,

however, that it was a custom-house word, and had reference to the gauging of proof spirits. Then the Doctor was asked his opinion. He said, somewhat uneasily, that he thought it was one of the new chemicals recently derived from coal tar; but, with all due respect to his Imperial Majesty, he took no stock in such new-fangled nonsense, and castor-oil would be good enough for his patients while he lived. The School-Master would know, some one suggested; but the School-Master had gone home early, being in expectation of an addition to his family. The Dominie took a hand in the discussion, and calling attention to the word figure, opined that it belonged to some branch of astronomy hitherto under the ban of the universities on account of its tendency to unsettle the minds of young men and promote the growth of infidelity. He lamented the atheistical tendency of modern times, and shook his head gravely as he said he hoped that the young Emperor would not be led astray.

Many suggestions were made; so many, indeed, that, it being plainly impossible to arrive at a consensus of opinion, the subject was dropped; and, wrapped in great clouds of tobacco smoke, the conversation made its way back to the herring fisheries.

But, later in the night, as the Head Burgess and the Doctor strolled slowly homeward, smoking their pipes in the calm moonlight, the question came up again, and they were earnestly discussing it in deep, sonorous tones when they came in front of the house of the School-Master, and saw by a light in the window of his study that he was still waiting the pleasure of Mrs. School-Master. They rapped with their pipes on the door-post, giving the signal that had often called their old friend forth to late card-parties at the tavern, and in a couple of minutes — for no one hurries in Ausserland — he appeared at the door in his old green dressing-gown and with his long-stemmed pipe in his mouth.

Now, the School-Master was not only a man of profound learning, but a man of rapid mental processes. He had heard from his open window the discussion as his two friends slowly came down the street; and, in point of fact, his professional instinct had led him to note the mystic word when it dropped from the Envoy's lips. This it was, rather than domestic expectations, that had kept him awake so late. And in the time that elapsed between the arrival of his friends and his appearance at the door, he had prepared himself to meet the situation.

He listened solemnly to the question with the tolerant interest of a man of science, and he

answered it without hesitation, in the imposing tone of perfect knowledge.

"A cotillion," he said, decisively, "is the one-billionth part of a minus million in quaternions, and is used by surveyors to determine the

logarithm of the cube root. That is, its use has hitherto been forbidden to the government surveyors on account of the uncertainty of the formula. That, however, has been finally determined by Prof. Lipsius, of Munich, and hereafter it may be applied to delicate calculations in determining the altitude of mountains too lofty for ascent. Gentlemen, I should like to

ask you in to take a night-cap with me, but, under the circumstances, you understand .... Doctor, I don't think we shall need you to-night. Good-evening, friends."

The Doctor and the Head Burgess ruminated over this new acquisition to their stock of knowledge as they strolled on down the street. At last the latter broke the silence and said, in a tone in which conviction struggled with sleepiness:

"Doctor, I have often thought what a hard life those poor devils on the mainland must have with their impassable mountains, and their railroads that kill and mangle you if they get a millionth part of a cube root out of the way, and the boundary-lines they are everlastingly quarreling about. Why, here in Ausserland, see how simple it all is! We never have any trouble about our boundary-lines. Where the land stops the water begins, and where the land begins the water stops; and that 's all there is to it!"

And with these words, as the last puff of his pipe rose heavenward, the Burgess dismissed the matter from his mind, and the Emperor's

proclamation legitimizing the Third Figure of the Cotillion vanished from his memory — and from that of all Ausserland — passing into oblivion with those that had told of Ausserland's change of nationality, of the conscription of her exempt citizens, and of the death of the great-grandmother of the hereditary Prince.

"SAMANTHA BOOM-DE-AY."

"SAMANTHA BOOM-DE-AY."

IT was a long, rough, sunlit stretch of stony turnpike that climbed across the flanks of a mountain range in Maine, and skirted a great forest for many miles, on its way to an upland farming-country near the Canada border.

As you ascended this road, on your right hand was a continuous wall of dull-hued evergreens, straggly pines and cedars, crowded closely and rising high above a thick underbrush. Behind this lay the vast, mysterious, silent wilderness. Here and there the emergence of a foamy, rushing river, or the entrance of a narrow corduroy road or trail, afforded a glimpse into its depths, and then you saw the slopes of hills and valleys, clad ever in one smoky, bluish veil of fir and pine.

On the other hand, where you could see through the roadside brush, you looked down the mountain slope to the plains below, where the brawling mountain streams quieted down into pleasant water-courses; where broad patches of meadow land and wheat field spread out from edges of the woods, and where, far, far off, clusters of farm-houses, and further yet, towns and villages, sent their smoke up above the hazy horizon.

It was a road of so much variety and sweep of view, as it kept its course along the boundary of the forest's dateless antiquity, and yet in full view of the prosperous outposts of a well-established civilization, that the most calloused traveler might have been expected to look about him and take an interest in his surroundings. But the three people who drove slowly up this hill one August afternoon might have been passing through a tunnel for all the attention they paid to the shifting scene.

Their vehicle was a farm-wagon; a fine, fresh-painted Concord wagon. The horses that drew it were large, sleek, and a little too fat. A comfortable country prosperity appeared in the whole outfit; and, although the raiment of the three travelers was unfashionably plain, they all three had an aspect of robust health and physical well-being, which was much at variance with their dismal countenances — for the middle-aged man who was driving looked sheepish and embarrassed; the good-looking, sturdy young fellow by his side was clearly in a state of frank, undisguised dejection, and the black-garbed woman, who sat behind in a splint-bottomed chair, had the extra-hard granite expression of the New England woman who particularly disapproves of something; whether that something be the destruction of her life's best hopes or her neighbor's method of making pie.

For mile after mile they jogged along in silence. Occasionally the elder man would make some brief and commonplace remark in a tentative way, as though to start a conversation. To these feeble attempts the young man made no

response whatever. The woman in black sometimes nodded and sometimes said "Yes?" with a rising inflection, which is a form of torture invented and much practiced in the New England States.

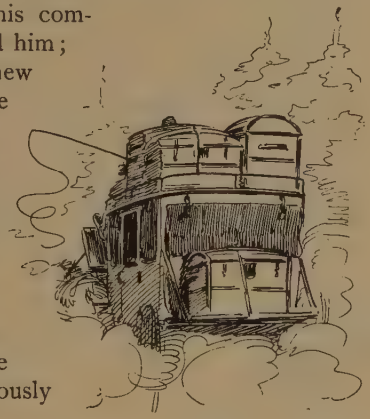
It was late in the afternoon when a noise behind and below them made them all glance round. The middle-aged man drew his horses to one side; and, in a cloud of dust, a big, old-fashioned stage of a dull-red color overtook them and lumbered on its way, the two drivers interchanging careless nods.

The woman did not alter her rigid attitude, and kept her eyes cast down; but the passing of the stage awakened a noticeable interest in the two men on the front seat. The elder gazed with surprise and curiosity at the freight that the top of the stage-coach bore — three or four

traveling trunks of unusual size, shape and color, clamped with iron and studded with heavy nails.

"Be them trunks?" he inquired, staring open-mouthed at the sight. "I never seen trunks like them before."

Neither of his companions answered him; but a curious new expression came into the young man's face. He sat up straight for the first time; and, as the wagon drew back into the narrow road, he began to whistle softly and melodiously



* * *

When Samantha Spaulding was left a widow with a little boy, she got, as one of her neighbors expressed it, "more politeness than pity." In truth, in so far as the condition has any luck about it, Samantha was lucky in her widowhood. She was a young widow, and a well-to-do widow. Old man Spaulding had been a good provider and a good husband; but he was much older than his wife, and had not particularly engaged her affections. Now that he was dead, after some eighteen months of married life, and had left her one of the two best farms in the county, everybody supposed that Mis' Spaulding would

marry Reuben Pett, who owned the other best farm, besides a saw-mill and a stage-route. That is, everybody thought so, except Samantha and Pett. They calmly kept on in their individual ways, and showed no inclination to join their two properties, though these throve and waxed more and more valuable year by year. They were good friends, however. Reuben Pett was a sagacious counselor, and a prudent man of affairs; and when Samantha's boy became old enough to work, he was apprenticed to Mr. Pett, to the end that he might some day take charge of the saw-mill business, which his mother stood ready to buy for him.

But the youthful Baxter Spaulding had not reached the age of twenty when he cast down his mother's hopes in utter ruin by coming home from a business trip to Augusta and announcing that he was going to marry, and that the bride of his choice was a young lady of the variety stage who danced for a living, her specialty being known as "hitch-and-kick."

Now, this may not seem, to you who read this, quite a complete, perfect and unimprovable thing in the way of the abomination of desolation; but then you must remember that you were not born and raised in a far corner of the Maine hills, and that you probably have so frequently seen play-actoress-women of all sorts that the mere idea of them has ceased to give

you cold creeps down your back. And to Samantha Spaulding the whole theatrical system, from the Tragic Muse to the "hitch-and-kick artiste," was conceived in sin and born in iniquity; and what her son proposed to do was to her no whit better than forgery, arson, or any other ungodliness. To you of a less distinctively Aroostook code of morals, I may say that the enchainer of young Spaulding's heart was quite as good a little girl in her morals and her manners as you need want to find on the stage or off it; and "hitch-and-kick" dancing was to her only a matter of business, as serio-comic singing had been to her mother, as playing Harlequin had been to her father, and as grinning through a horse-collar had been to her grandfather and great-grandfather, famous old English clowns in their day, one of whom had been a partner of Grimaldi. She made her living, it is true, by traveling around the country singing a song called "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay," which required a great deal of high-kicking for its just and full artistic expression; but then, it should be remembered, it was the way she had always made her living, and her mother's living, too, since the old lady lost her serio-comic voice. And as her mother had taught her all she knew about dancing, and as she and her mother had hardly been separated for an hour since she was out of her cradle, Little Betty Billington looked on her profession, as you well may imagine, with eyes quite different from those with which Mrs. Samantha Spaulding regarded it. It was a lop-sided contest that ensued, and that lasted for months. On one side were Baxter and his Betty and Betty's mama

— after that good lady got over her natural objections to having her daughter marry "out of the profession." On the other side was Samantha, determined enough to be a match for all three of them. Mr. Reuben Pett hovered on the outskirts, asking only peace.

At last he was dragged into the fight. Baxter Spaulding went to Bangor, where his lady's company happened to be playing, with the avowed intention of wedding Betty out of hand. When his mother found it out, she took Reuben Pett and her boy's apprenticeship-indenture to Bangor with her, caught the youngster ere the deed was done, and, having the majesty of the law behind her, she was taking her helpless captive home on this particular August afternoon. He was on the front seat of the wagon, Samantha was on the splint-bottomed chair, and Reuben Pett was driving.

* * *

It was a two-days' drive from the railroad station at Byram's Pond around the spur of the mountain to their home. The bi-weekly stage did it in a day; but it was unwonted traveling for Mr. Pett's easy-going team. Therefore, the three travelers put up at Canada Jake's camp; so called, though it was only on the edge of the wilderness, because it was what Maine people generally mean when they talk of a "camp"— a large shanty of rough, unpainted planks, with a kitchen and eating-room below, and rudely partitioned sleeping-rooms in the upper story. It stood by the roadside, and served the purpose of an inn.

Canada Jake was lounging in the doorway as they came up, squat, bullet-headed and bead-eyed; a very ordinary specimen of mean French Canadian. He welcomed them in as if he were conferring a favor upon them, fed them upon black, fried meat and soggy, boiled potatos, and later on bestowed them in three wretched enclosures overhead.

He himself staid awake until the sound of two bass and one treble snore penetrated the thin partition planks; and then he stole softly up the ladder that served for stairway, and slipped into the moonlit little room where Baxter Spaulding was lying on a cot-bed six inches too short for him. Putting his finger upon his lips, he whispered to the wakeful youth:

"Sh-h-h-h-h-h! You got you' boots on?"

"No," said Baxter softly.

"Come wiz me and don' make no noise!"

And the next thing that Baxter Spaulding knew, he was outside of the house, behind the wood-pile, holding a slight but charming figure in his arms, and saying:

"Why, Betty! why, Betty!" in a dazed sort of way, while a fat and motherly lady near by stood shaking with silent sobs, like a jelly-fish convulsed with sympathy and affection.

"We 'eaded you off in the stage-coach!" was all she said.

* * *

The next morning Mr. Reuben Pett was called out of the land of dreams by a familiar feminine voice from the next room.

"Reuben Pett!" it said; "*where is Baxter?*"

"Baxter!" yelled Mr. Pett; "your ma wants yer!"

But Baxter came not. His room was empty. Mr. Pett descended and found his host out by the wood-pile, splitting kindling. Canada Jake had seen nothing whatever of the young man. He opined that the youth most 'ave got up airlee, go feeshin'.

Reuben Pett went back and reported to Samantha Spaulding through the door. Samantha's voice came back to him as a voice from the bottom sub-cellar of abysmal gloom.

"Reuben," she said; "them women have been here!"

"Why, Samantha!" he said; "it ain't possible!"

"I heard them last night," returned Samantha, in tones of conviction. "I know, now. I did. I thought then I was dreamin'."

"Most likely you was, too!" said Mr. Pett, encouragingly.

"Well, I wa'n't!" rejoined Mrs. Spaulding, with a suddenness and an acerbity that made her listener jump. "*They 've stole my clothes!*"

"Whatever do you mean, Samantha?" roared Reuben Pett.

"I mean," said Mrs. Spaulding, in a tone that left no doubt whatever that what she did mean she meant very hard; "I mean that that hussy has been here in the night, and has took every stitch and string of my clothing, and ain't left me so much as a button-hole, except — except — except —"

"Except what?" demanded Reuben, in stark amazement.

"Except that there idolatrous flounced frock the shameless critter doos her stage-dancing in!"

Mr. Pett might, perhaps, have offered appropriate condolences on this bereavement had not a thought struck him which made him scramble down the ladder again and hasten to the wood-shed, where he had put up his team the night before. The team was gone — the fat horses and fresh painted wagon, and the tracks led back down the road up which they had ridden the day before.

Once more Mr. Pett climbed the ladder; but when he announced his loss he was met, to his astonishment, with severity instead of with sympathy.

"I don't care, Reuben Pett," Samantha spoke through the door; "if you 've lost ten horses and nineteen wagons. You got to hitch some kind of a critter to *suthin'*, for we 're goin'

to ketch them people to-day or my name 's not Samantha Spaulding."

"But Law Sakes Alive, Samantha!" expostulated Mr. Pett; "you ain't goin' to wear no circus clothes, be ye?"

"You go hunt a team, Mr. Pett," returned his companion, tartly; I know my own business."

Mr. Pett remonstrated. He pointed out that there was neither horse nor vehicle to be had in the neighborhood, and that pursuit was practically hopeless in view of the start which the runaways had. But Mrs. Spaulding was obdurate with an obduracy that made the heart of Reuben Pett creep into his boots. After ten minutes of vain combating, he saw, beyond a doubt, that the chase would have to continue even if it were to be carried on astraddle a pair of confiscated cows. Having learned that much, he went drearily down again to discuss the situation with Canada Pete. Canada Pete was indisposed to be of the slightest assistance, until Mr. Pett reminded him of the danger of the law in which he stands who aids a runaway apprentice in his flight. After that, the sulky

Canadian awoke to a new and anxious interest; and, before long, he remembered that a lumberer who lived "a piece" up the road had a bit of meadow-land reclaimed from the forest, and sometimes kept an old horse in it. It was a horse, however, that had always positively refused to go under saddle, so that a new complication barred the way, until suddenly the swarthy face of the *habitant* lit up with a joyful, white-toothed grin.

"My old calèche zat I bring from Canada! I let you have her, hey? You come wiz me!"

And Canada Pete led the way through the underbrush to a bit of a clearing near his house, where were accumulated many years' deposits of household rubbish; and here, in a desert of tin-cans and broken bottles and crockery, stood the oldest of all old calashes.

There are calashes and calashes, but the calash or calèche of Canada is practically of one type. It is a high-hung, tilting chaise, with a commodious back seat and a capacious hood, and with an absurd, narrow, cushioned bar in front for the driver to sit on. It is a startling-looking vehicle in its mildest form, and when you gaze upon a calash for the first time you will probably wonder whether, if a stray boy should catch on behind, the shafts would not fly up into the air, bearing the horse between them. Canada Pete's calash had evidently stood long a monument of decay, yet being of sturdy and simple construction, it showed distinct signs of life when Pete seized its curved shafts and ran it backward and forward to prove that the wheels could still revolve and the great hood still nod

and sway like a real calash in commission. It was ragged, it was rusty, it was water-soaked and weather-beaten, blistered and stained; but it hung together, and bobbed along behind Canada Pete, lurching and rickety, but still a vehicle, and entitled to rank as such.

The calash was taken into Pete's back-yard; and then, after a brief and energetic campaign, Pete secured the horse, which was a very good match for the calash. He was an old horse, and he had the spring-halt. He held his long ewe-neck to one side, being blind in one eye; and this gave him the coquettish appearance of a mincing old maid. A little polka-step, which he affected with his fore-feet, served to carry out this idea.

Also, he had been feeding on grass for a whole Summer, and his spirits were those of the young lambkin that gambols in the mead. He was happy, and he wanted to make others happy, although he did not seem always to know the

right way to go about it. When Mr. Pett and Canada Pete had got this animal harnessed up with odds and ends of rope and leather, they sat down and wiped their brows. Then Mr. Pett started off to notify Mrs. Samantha Spaulding.

Mr. Pett was a man unused to feminine society, except such as he had grown up with from early childhood, and he was of a naturally modest, even bashful disposition. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was startled when, on re-entering the living-room of Canada Pete's camp, he found himself face to face with a strange lady, and a lady, at that, of a strangeness that he had never conceived of before. She wore upon her head a preposterously tall bonnet, or at least a towering structure that seemed to be intended to serve the purpose of a bonnet. It reminded him — except for its shininess and newness — of the hood of the calash; indeed, it may have suggested itself vaguely to his memory that his grandmother had worn a piece of head-gear something similar, though not so shapely, which in very truth was nicknamed a "calash" from this obvious resemblance. The lady's shapely and generously feminine figure was closely drawn into a waist of shining black satin, cut down in a V on the neck, before and behind, and ornamented with very large sleeves of a strange pattern. But her skirts — for they were voluminous beyond numeration — were the wonder of her attire. Within fold after fold they swathed a foamy mystery of innumerable gauzy white underpinnings. As Mr. Pett's abashed eye traveled down this marvel of costume it landed upon a pair of black stockings, the feet of which

appeared to be balanced somewhat uncertainly in black satin slippers with queer high heels.

"Reuben Pett," said the lady suddenly and and with decision, "don't you say nothing! If you knew how them shoes was pinching me, you 'd know what I was goin' through."

Mr. Pett had to lean up against the door-post before recovering himself.

"Why, Samantha!" he said at last; "seems to me like you *had* gone through more or less."

Here Mrs. Spaulding reached out in an irritation that carried her beyond all speech, and boxed Mr. Pett's ears. Then she drew back, startled at her own act, but even more surprised at Mr. Pett's reception of it. He was neither surprised nor disconcerted. He leaned back against the door-post and gazed on unperturbed.

"My!" he said; "Samantha, be them that play-actresses' clo'es?"

Mrs. Spaulding nodded grimly.

"Well, all I 've got to say, Samantha," remarked Reuben Pett, as he straightened himself up and started out to bring their chariot to the door; "all I 've got to say, and all I want to say, is that she must be a mighty fine figure of a woman, and that you 're busting her seams."

Down the old dusty road the old calash jiggled and juggled, "weaving" most of the way in easy tacks down the sharp declivities. On the front seat — or, rather, on the upholstered bar — sat Reuben Pett, squirming uncomfortably, and every now and then trying to sit side-saddle fashion for the sake of easier converse with his fair passenger. Mrs. Spaulding occupied the back seat, lifted high above her driver by the tilt

of the curious vehicle, which also served to make the white foundation of her costume particularly visible, so that there were certain jolting moments when she suggested a black-robed Venus rising from a snowy foam-crest. At such moments Mr. Pett lost control of his horse to such an extent that the animal actually danced and fairly turned his long neck around as though it were set on a pivot. When such a crisis was reached, Mrs. Spaulding would utter a shrill and startling "hi!" which would cause the horse to

stop suddenly, hurling Mr. Pett forward with such force that he would have to grab his narrow perch to save his neck, and for the next hundred yards or so of descent his attention would be wholly concentrated upon his duties as driver — for the horse insisted upon waltzing at the slightest shock to his nerves.

Mr. Pett's tendency to turn around and stare should not be laid up against him. For twenty years he had seen his neighbor, Mrs. Samantha Spaulding, once, at least; perhaps twice or thrice; mayhap even six or seven times a week; and yet, on this occasion, he had fair excuse for looking over his shoulder now and then to assure himself that the fair passenger at whose feet he — literally — sat, was indeed that very Samantha of his twenty years' knowledge. How was he, who was only a man, and no ladies' man at that, to understand that the local dressmaker and the local habit of wearing wrinkly black alpaca and bombazine were to blame for his never having known that his next door neighbor had a superb bust and a gracious waist? How was he to know that the blindness of his own eyes was alone accountable for his ignorance of the whiteness of her teeth, and the shapeliness of the arms that peeped from the big, old-fashioned sleeves? Samantha's especial care upon her farm was her well-appointed dairy, and it is well known that to some women work in the spring-house imparts a delicate creaminess of complexion; but he was no close observer, and how was he to know that that was the reason why the little V in the front of Samantha's black satin bodice melted so softly into the fresh

bright tint of her neck and chin? How, indeed, was a man who had no better opportunities than Reuben Pett had enjoyed, to understand that the pretty skirt-dancer dress, a dainty, fanciful travesty of an old-time fashion, had only revealed and not created an attractive and charming woman in his life-long friend and neighbor?

Samantha was not thinking in the least of herself. She had accepted her costume as something which she had no choice but to assume in the exercise of an imperative duty. She wore it for conscience sake only, just as any other New England martyr to her New England convictions of right might have worn a mealsack or a suit of armor had circumstances imposed such a necessity.

But when Reuben Pett had looked around three or four times, she grasped her skirts in both hands and pushed them angrily down to

their utmost length. Then, with a true woman's dislike of outraging pretty dress material, she made a furtive experiment or two to see if her skirts would not answer all the purposes of modesty without hanging wrong. Perhaps she had a natural talent that way; at any rate, she found that they would.

"Samantha," said Reuben Pett, over his shoulder, "what under the sun sense be there in chasin' them two young fools up? If they want to marry, why not let 'em marry? It 's natural for 'em to want to, and it 's agin nature to stop 'em. May be it would n't be sech a bad marriage, after all. Now you look at it in the light of conscience —"

"*You* 're a nice hand to be advocating marriage, Reuben Pett," said Mrs. Spaulding; "you jest hurry up that horse and I 'll look out for the light of conscience."

Mr. Pett chirruped to the capering ewe-neck, and they jolted downward in silence for a half a mile. Then he said suddenly, as if emerging from a cloud of reflection:

"I ain't never said nothing agin marriage!"

* * *

Noon-time came, and the hot August sun poured down upon them, until the old calash felt, as Mr. Pett remarked, like a chariot of fire. This observation was evolved in a humorous way to slacken the tension of a situation which was becoming distinctly unpleasant. Moved by a spirit of genial and broadly human benevolence which was somewhat unnatural to

him, Mr. Pett had insisted upon pleading the cause of the youthful runaways with an insistence that was at once indiscreet and futile. In the end his companion had ordered him to hold his tongue, an injunction he was quite incapable of obeying. After a series of failures in the way of conversational starters, he finally scored a success by suggesting that they should pause and partake of the meagre refection which Canada Pete had furnished them—a modest repast of doughnuts, apples and store-pie. This they ate at the first creek where they found a convenient place to water the horse.

When they resumed their journey, they found that they were all refreshed and in brighter mood. Even the horse was intoxicated by the water and that form of verdure which may pass for grass on the margin of a mountain highway in Maine.

This change of feeling was also perceptible in the manner and bearing of the human beings who made up the cavalcade. Samantha adjusted her furbelows with unconscious deftness and daintiness, while she gazed before her into the bright blue heaven; and, I am sorry to say, sucked her teeth. Reuben frankly flung one leg over the end of his seat, and conversed easily as he drove along, poised like a boy who rides a bare-back horse to water. After awhile he even felt emboldened to resume the forbidden theme of conversation.

"Nature is nature, Samantha," he said.

"'T is in some folks," responded Samantha, dryly; "there 's others seems to be able to

git along without it." And Reuben turned this speech over in his mind for a good ten minutes.

Then, just as he was evidently about to say something, he glanced up and saw a sight which changed the current of his reflections. It was only a cloud in the heavens, but it evidently awakened a new idea in his mind.

"Samantha," he said, in a tone of voice

that seemed inappropriately cheerful; "they 's goin' to be a thunder storm."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Spaulding.

"Certain," asseverated Mr. Pett; "there she is a-comin up, right agin the wind."

A thunder storm on the edge of a Maine forest is not wholly a joke. It sometimes has a way of playing with the forest trees much as a table d'hôte diner plays with the wooden tooth-picks. Samantha's protests, when Mr. Pett

stated that he was going to get under the cover of an abandoned saw-mill which stood by the roadside a little way ahead of them, were more a matter of form than anything else. But still, when they reached the rough shed of unpainted and weather-beaten boards, and Mr. Pett, in turning in gave the vehicle a sudden twist that broke the shaft, her anger at the delay thus rendered necessary was beyond her control.

"I declare to goodness, Reuben Pett," she cried; "if you ain't the awkwardest! Anybody 'd a'most think you 'd done that a purpose."

"Oh, no, Samantha!" said Reuben Pett, pleasantly; "it ain't right to talk like that. This here machine 's dreadful old. Why, Samantha, we 'd ought to sympathize with it — you and me!"

"Speak for yourself, Mr. Pett," said Samantha. "I ain't so dreadful old, whatever you may be."

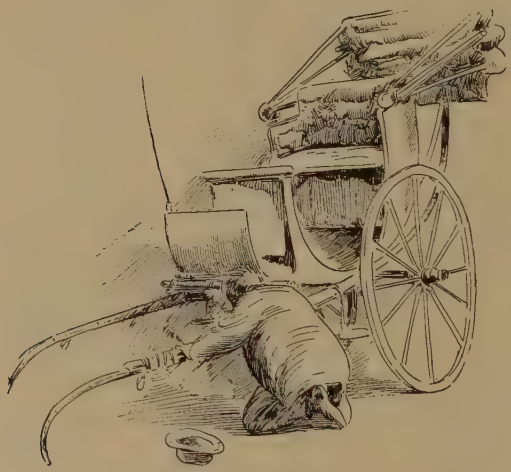
At the moment Mr. Pett made no rejoinder to this. He unshipped the merry horse, and tied him to a post under the old saw-mill, and then he pulled the calash up the runway into the first story, and patiently set about the difficult task of mending the broken shaft, while Samantha, looking out through the broad, open doorway, watched the fierce Summer storm descend upon the land; and she tapped her impatient foot until it almost burst its too narrow satin covering.

"No, Samantha," Mr. Pett said, at last, intently at work upon his splicing; "you ain't so dreadful old, for a fact; but I 've knowed you

when you was a dreadful sight younger. I 've knowed you," he continued, reflectively, "when you was the spryest girl in ten miles round — when you could dance as lively as that young lady whose clo'es you 're a-wearin'."

"Don't you dare to talk to me about that jade!" said Mrs. Spaulding, snappishly.

"Why, no! certainly not!" said Mr. Pett; "I did n't mean no comparison. Only, as I was a-sayin', there was a time, Samantha, when you could dance."



"And who says I can't dance now?" demanded Mrs. Spaulding, with anger in her voice.

"My! I remember wunst," said Mr. Pett; and then the sense of Samantha's angry question seemed to penetrate his wandering mind.

"'Dance now?'" he repeated. "Sho! Sa-

mantha, you could n't dance nowadays if you was to try."

"Who says I could n't?" asked Samantha, again, with a set look developing around the corners of her mouth.

"*I* say you could n't," replied Mr. Pett, obtusely. "'T ain't in nature. But there was a time, Samantha, when you was great on fancy steps."

"Think I 'm too old for fancy steps now, do you?" She looked at her tormentor savagely, out of the corners of her eyes.

"Well, not too old, may be, Samantha," went on Mr. Pett; "but may be you ain't that limber you was. I know how it is. I ain't smart as I used to be, myself. Why, do you remember that night down at the Corners, when we two was the only ones that could jump over Squire Tate's high andirons and cut a pigeon-wing before we come down?"

Mr. Pett appeared to be entirely unconscious that Mrs. Spaulding's bosom was heaving, that her eyes were snapping angrily, and that her foot was beating on the floor in that tattoo with which a woman announces that she is near an end of her patience.

"How high was them andirons?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Reuben, indifferently. He kept his eyes fixed on his work; but while he worked his splice closer with his right hand, with his left he took off his hat and held it out rather more than two feet above the floor.

"'Bout as high as that, may be," he said.

"Remember the tune we done that to? Went some sort of way like this, did n't it?" And with that remarkable force of talent which is only developed in country solitudes, Mr. Pett began to whistle an old-time air, a jiggetty, wiggetty whirl-around strain born of some dead darkey's sea-sawing fiddle-bow, with a volume of sustained sound that would have put to shame anything the saw-mill could have done for itself in its buzzingest days.

"Whee-ee-ee, ee-ee, ee ee ee, whee, ee, ee, ee *ee!*" whistled Mr. Pett; and then, softly, and as if only the dim stirring of memory moved him, he began to call the old figures of the old dance.

"Forward all!" he crooned. "Turn partners! Sashay! Alleman' all! Whee-ee-ee, ee-ee, ee ee, ee ee ee, whee, ee, ee, ee, ee ee *ee!*"

And suddenly, like the tiger leaping from her lair, the soft pattering and shuffling of feet behind him resolved itself into a quick, furious rhythmic beat, and Samantha Spaulding shot high into the air, holding up her skirts with both hands, while her neat ankles crossed each other in a marvelous complication of agility a good twelve inches above his outstretched hat.

"There!" she cried, as she landed with a flourish that combined skill and grace; "there 's what I done with you, and much I think of it! If you want to see dancin' that is dancin' look here. Here 's what I did with Ben Griggs at the shuckin' that same year; and you wa'n't there, and good reason why!"

And then and there, while Reuben Pett's great rasping whistle rang through the old saw-

mill, shrilling above the roar of the storm outside, Mrs. Samantha Spaulding executed with lightning rapidity and with the precision of perfect and confident knowledge, a dancing-step which for scientific complexity and daring originality had been twenty years before the surprise, the delight, the tingling, shocking, tempting nine-days'-wonder of the country-side.

"Whee-ee-ee, ee-ee, ee ee, ee ee ee, whee, ee, ee ee, ee *ee!*" Reuben Pett's whistle died away from sheer lack of breath as Samantha came to the end of her dance.

* * * *

There is nothing that hath a more heavy and leaden cold than a chilled enthusiasm. When the storm was over, although a laughing light

played over the landscape; although diamond sparkles lit up the grateful white mist that rose from the refreshed earth; although the sun shone as though he had been expecting that thunder storm all day, and was inexpressibly glad that it was over and done with, Samantha leaned back in her seat in the calash, and nursed a cheerless bitterness of spirit—such a bitterness as is known only to the New England woman to whom has come a realization of the fact that she has made a fool of herself. Samantha Spaulding. Made a fool of herself. At her age. After twenty years of respectable widowhood. Her, of all folks. And with that old fool. Who 'd be'n a-settin'

and a-settin' and a-settin' all these years. And never said Boo! And now for him to twist her round his finger like that. She felt like — well, she did n't know how she *did* feel.

She was so long wrapped up in her own thoughts that it was with a start that she awoke to the fact that they were making very slow progress, and that this was due to the very peculiar conduct of Mr. Pett. He was making little or no effort to urge the horse along, and the horse, consequently, having got tired of wasting his bright spirits on the empty air, was maundering. So was Mr. Pett, in another way. He mumbled to himself; from time to time he whistled scraps of old-fashioned tunes, and occasionally he sang to himself a brief catch — the catch coming in about the third or fourth bar.

"Look here, Reuben Pett!" demanded Samantha, shrilly; "be you going to get to Byram's Pond to-night?"

"I *kin*," replied Reuben.

"Well, *be* you?" Samantha Spaulding inquired.

"I d'no. Fact is, I wa'n't figurin' on that just now."

"Well, what *was* you figurin' on?" snapped Mrs. Spaulding.

"When you 's goin' to marry me," Mr. Pett answered with perfect composure. "Look here, Samantha! it 's this way: here 's twenty years you 've kept me waitin'."

"*Me* kept you waitin'! Well, Reuben Pett, if I ever!"

"Don't arguefy, Samantha; don't arguefy," remonstrated Mr. Pett; "I ain't rakin up no

details. What we 've got to deal with is this question as it stands to-day. Be you a-goin' to marry me or be you not? And if you be, when be you?"

"Reuben Pett," exclaimed Samantha, with a showing of severity which was very creditable under the circumstances; "ain't you *ashamed* of talk like that between folks of our age?"

"*We* ain't no age — no age in particular, Samantha," said Mr. Pett. "A woman who can cut a pigeon-wing over a hat held up higher than any two pair of andirons that I ever see is young enough for me, anyway." And he chuckled over his successful duplicity.

Samantha blushed a red that was none the less becoming for a tinge of russet. Then she took a leaf out of Mr. Pett's book.

"Young enough for you?" she repeated. "Well, I guess so! I wa'n't thinkin' of myself when I said old, Mr. Pett. I was thinkin' of folks who was gettin' most too old to drive down hill in a hurry."

"Who 's that?" asked Reuben.

"I ain't namin' any names," said Samantha; "but I 've knowed the time when you was n't so awful afraid of gettin' a spill off the front seat of a calash. Lord! how time does take the tuck out of some folks!" she concluded, addressing vacancy.

"Do you mean to say that I da'sn't drive you down to Byram's Pond to-night?" Mr. Pett inquired defiantly.

"I don't know anything about it," said Mrs. Spaulding.

Mr. Pett stuck a crooked forefinger into his

lady-love's face, and gazed at her with such an intensity that she was obliged at last to return his penetrating gaze.

"If I get you to Byram's Pond before the train goes, will you marry me the first meetin' house we come to?"

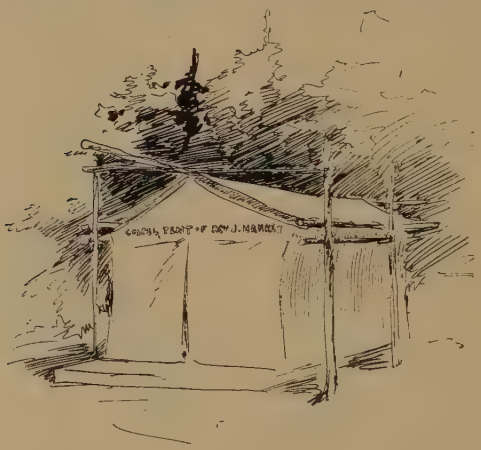
"I will," said Mrs. Spaulding, after a moment's hesitation, well remembering what the other party to the bargain had forgotten, that there was no church in Byram Pond, nor nearer than forty miles down the railroad.

* * *

In the warm dusk of a Summer's evening, a limping, shackle-gaited, bewildered horse, dragging a calash in the last stages of ruin, brought two travelers into the village of Byram's Pond. Far up on the hills there lingered yet the clouds of dust that marked where that calash had come down those hills at a pace whereat no calash ever came down hill before. Dust covered the two travelers so thickly, that, although the woman's costume was of peculiar and striking construction, its eccentricities were lost in a dull and uniform grayness. Her bonnet, however, would have excited comment. It had apparently been of

remarkable height; but pounding against the hood of the calash had so knocked it out of all semblance to its original shape, that with its great wire hoops sticking out "four ways for Sunday," it looked more like a discarded crinoline perched upon her head than any known form of feminine bonnet.

The calash slowed up as it drew near the town. Suddenly it stopped short, and both the travelers gazed with startled interest at a



capacious white tent reared by the roadside. From within this tent came the strains of a straining melodeon. Over the portal was stretched a canvas sign:

GOSPEL TENT OF REV. J. HANKEY.

As the travelers stared with all their eyes, they saw the flap of the tent thrown back,

and four figures came out. There were two ladies, a stout, middle-aged lady, a shapely, buxom young lady, a tall, broad-shouldered young man, and the fourth figure was unmistakably a Minister of one of the Congregational denominations. The young man and the two ladies walked down the road a little way, and, entering a solid-looking farm wagon, drove off behind a pair of plump horses, in the direction of the railroad station, while the minister waved them a farewell that was also a benediction.

"Git down, Samantha!" said Reuben Pett, "and straighten out that bonnet of yours. Parson 's got another job before prayer-meetin' begins."

MY DEAR MRS. BILLINGTON.

MY DEAR MRS. BILLINGTON.

ISS CARMELITA BILLINGTON sat in a bent-wood rocking-chair in an upper room of a great hotel by the sea, and cried for a little space, and then for a little space dabbed at her hot cheeks and red eyes with a handkerchief wet with cologne; and dabbed and cried, and dabbed and cried, without seeming to get any "forwarder." The sun and the fresh breeze and the smell of the sea came in through her open windows, but she heeded them not. She mopped herself with cologne till she felt as if she could never again bear to have that honest scent near her dainty nose; but between the mops the tears trickled and trickled and trickled; and she was dreadfully afraid that inwardly, into the surprising great big cavity that had suddenly found room for itself in her poor little heart, the tears would trickle, trickle, trickle forever. It was no use telling herself she had done right. When you have done right and wish you had n't had to you can't help having a profound contempt for the right. The right is respectable, of course, and proper and commendable and— in short, it 's the right; — but, oh! what a nuisance it is! You can't help wondering in your

private mind why the right is so disagreeable and unpleasant and unsatisfactory, and the wrong so extremely nice. Of course, it was right to refuse Jack Hatterly; but why, why on earth could n't it just as easily have been right to accept him? And the more she thought about it the more she doubted whether it was always quite right to do right, and whether it was not sometimes entirely wrong not to do wrong.

No; it was no use telling herself to be a brave girl. She was a brave girl and she knew it. In the face of the heartless world she could bear herself as jauntily as if she were heartless, too; but in the privacy of her own room, with Mama fast asleep on the verandah below, she could not see the slightest use in humbugging herself. She was perfectly miserable, and the rest of her reflec-

tions might have been summed up in the simple phrase of early girlhood, "So there!"

It was no consolation to poor Carmelita's feelings that her little private tragedy was of a most business-like, commonplace, unromantic complexion. It only made her more disgusted with herself for having made up her mind to do the right thing. She was not torn from her chosen love by the hands of cruel parents. Her parents had never denied her anything in her life, and if she had really wanted to wed a bankrupt bashaw with three tails and an elephant's head, she could have had her will. Nor did picturesque poverty have anything to do with the situation. She was rich and so was Jack. Nor could she rail against a parental code of morality too stern for tender hearts. There was not the least atom of objection to Jack in any respect. He was absolutely as nice as could be — and, unless I am greatly misinformed, a good-looking young man, deeply in love, can be very nice indeed.

And yet there was no doubt in Carmelita's mind that it was her plain duty to refuse Jack. To marry him would mean to utterly give up and throw aside a plan of life, which, from her earliest childhood, she had never imagined to be capable of the smallest essential alteration. If a man who had devoted his whole mind and soul to the business of manufacturing overshoes were suddenly invited to become a salaried poet on a popular magazine, he could not regard the proposed change of profession as more preposterously impossible than the idea of marriage with Jack Hatterly seemed to Miss Carmelita Billington.

For Miss Billington occupied a peculiar position. She was the Diana of a small but highly prosperous city in the South-West; a city which her father had built up in years of enterprising toil. To mention the town of Los Brazos to any capitalist in the land was to call up the name of Billington, the brilliant speculator who, ruined on the Boston stock-market, went to Texas and absolutely created a town which for wealth, beauty and social distinction had not its equal in the great South-West. It was colonized with college graduates from New York, Boston and Philadelphia; and, in Los Brazos, boys who had left cane-rushes and campus choruses scarce ten years behind them had fortunes in the hundred thousands, and stood high in public places. As the daughter of the founder of Los Brazos, Miss Billington's fortunes were allied, she could not but feel, to the place of her birth. There must she marry, there must she continue the social leadership which her mother was only too ready to lay down. The Mayor of the town, the District Attorney, the Supreme Court Judge and the Bishop were all among her many suitors; and six months before she had wished, being a natural-born sport, if she *was* a girl, that they would only get together and shake dice to see which of them should have her. But then she had n't come East and met Jack Hatterly.

She thought of the first day she had seen the Atlantic Ocean and Jack, and she wished now that she had never been seized with the fancy to gaze on the great water. And yet, what a glorious day that was! How grand

she had thought the ocean! And how grand she had thought Jack! And now she had given him up forever, that model of manly beauty and audacity; Jack with his jokes and his deviltries and his exhaustless capacity for ever new and original larks. Was it absolutely needful? Her poor little soul had to answer itself that it was. To leave Los Brazos and the great house with

the cool quiet court-yard and the broad verandahs, and to live in crowded, noisy New York, where she knew not a soul except Jack — to be separated from those two good fairies who lived only to gratify her slightest wish — to "go back" on Los Brazos, the pride of the Billingtons — no; it was impossible, impossible! She must stick to her post and make her choice between the Mayor and the Judge and the District Attorney and the Bishop. But how dull and serious and business-like they all seemed to her now that she had known Jack Hatterly, the first man she had ever met with a well-developed sense of humor!

What made it hardest for poor Carmelita was, perhaps, that fate had played her cruel pranks ever since the terrible moment of her act of renunciation. Thirty-six hours before, at the end of the dance in the great hotel parlors, Jack had proposed to her. For many days she had known what was coming, and what her answer must be, and she had given him no chance to see her alone. But Jack was Jack, and he had made his opportunity for himself, and had said his say under cover of the confusion at the end of the dance; and she had promised to give him his answer later, and she had given it, after a sleepless and tearful night; just a line to say that it could never, never be, and that he must not ask her again. And it had been done in such a commonplace, unromantic way that she hated to think of it — the meagre, insufficient little note handed to her maid to drop in the common letter-box of the hotel, and to lie there among bills and circulars and all sorts of silly every-day correspondence, until the hotel-clerk should take it out and put it in Jack's box. She had passed through the office a little later, and her heart had sunk within her as she saw his morning's mail waiting for him in its pigeon-hole, and thought what the opening of it would bring to him.

But this was the least of her woe. Later came the fishing trip on the crowded cat-boat. She had fondly hoped that he would have the delicacy to excuse himself from that party of pleasure; but no, he was there, and doing just as she had asked him to, treating her as if nothing had happened, which was certainly the

most exasperating thing he could have done. And then, to crown it all, they had been caught in a storm; and had not only been put in serious danger, which Carmelita did not mind at all, but had been tossed about until they were sore, and drenched with water, and driven into the stuffy little hole that was called a cabin, to choke and swelter and bump about in nauseated

misery for two mortal hours, with the spray driving in through the gaping hatches; a dozen of them in all, packed together in there in the ill-smelling darkness. And so it was no wonder that, after a second night of utter misery, Miss Carmelita Billington felt so low in her nerves that she was quite unable to withhold her tears as

she sat alone and thought of what lay behind her and before her.

She had been sitting alone a long time when she heard her mother come up the stairs and enter her own room. Mrs. Billington was as stout as she was good-natured, and her step was not that of a light-weight. An irresistible desire came to the girl to go to her and pour out her grief, with her head pillowed on that broad and kindly bosom. She started up and hurried into the little parlor that separated her room from her mother's. As she entered the room at one door, Mr. Jack Hatterly entered through the door opening into the corridor. Then Carmelita lost her breath in wonderment, anger and dismay, for Mr. Jack Hatterly put his arm around her waist, kissed her in a somewhat casual manner, and then the door of her mother's room opened and her mother appeared; and instead of rebuking such extraordinary conduct, assisted Mr. Hatterly in gently thrusting her into the chamber of the elder lady with the kind of caressing but steering push with which a child is dismissed when grown-ups wish to talk privately.

"Stay in there, my dear, for the present; Mr. Hatterly and I have something to say to each other. I will call you later."

And before Carmelita fairly knew what had happened to her she found herself on the other side of the door, wondering exactly where insanity had broken out in the Billington family.

It took the astonished Miss Billington a couple of seconds to pull herself together, and then she seized the handle of the door with the full intention of walking indignantly into the

parlor and demanding an explanation. But she had hardly got the door open by the merest crack when the discourse of Mr. John Hatterly paralyzed her as thoroughly as had his previous actions.

"My dear Mrs. Billington," he was saying, in what Carmelita always called his "florid" voice, "I thoroughly understand your position, and I know the nature of the ties that bind Carmelita to her father's home. Had I known of them earlier, I might have avoided an association that could only have one ending for me. But it is not for myself that I speak now. Perhaps I have been unwise, and even wrong; but what is

done is done, and I know now that she loves me as she could love no other man."

"Good gracious!" said Carmelita to herself, behind the door; "how does he know that?"

"Is it not possible, Mr. Hatterly, that there

is some misunderstanding?" asked Mrs. Billington.

"My dear Mrs. Billington," said Jack, impressively; "there is no possible misunderstanding. She told me so herself."

Carmelita opened her eyes and her mouth, and stood as one petrified.

"Well, if I ever — !" was all that she whispered to herself, in the obscurity of her mother's room. She had addressed just seven words to Jack Hatterly on the fishing trip, and five of these were "Apple pie, if you please;" and the other two, uttered later, were "Not very."

"But, Mr. Hatterly," persisted Mrs. Billington, "when did you receive this assurance of my daughter's feelings? You tell me that you spoke to her on this subject only the night before last, and I am sure she has hardly been out of my sight since."

"Yesterday," said Jack, in his calmest and most assured tone; "on the boat, coming home, during the squall."

Miss Billington *(behind the door, aside)*. — "The shameless wretch! Why, he does n't seem even to *know* that he 's lying!"

"But, Mr. Hatterly," exclaimed Mrs. Billington; "during the squall we were all in the cabin, and you were outside, steering!"

"Certainly," said Jack.

"Then — excuse me, Mr. Hatterly — but how could my daughter have conveyed any such intelligence to you?"

Miss Billington *(as before)*. — "What *is* the man going to say now? He must be perfectly crazy!"

Mr. Hatterly was calm and imperturbed.

"My dear Mrs. Billington," he responded, "you may or may not have observed a small heart-shaped aperture in each door or hatch of the cabin, exactly opposite the steersman's seat. It was through one of these apertures that your daughter communicated with me. Very appropriate shape, I must say, although their purpose is simply that of ventilation."

"It was very little ventilation we had in that awful place, Mr. Hatterly!" interjected Mrs. Billington, remembering those hours of horror.

"Very little, indeed, my dear Mrs. Billington," replied Mr. Hatterly, in an apologetic tone; "and I am afraid your daughter and I, between us, were responsible for some of your discomfort. She had her hand through the port ventilator about half the time."

Miss Billington *(as before)*. — "I wonder the man is n't struck dead, sitting there! Of

all the wicked, heartless falsehoods I ever heard — !"

"And may I ask, Mr. Hatterly," inquired Mrs. Billington, "what my daughter's hand was doing through the ventilator?"

"Pressing mine, God bless her!" responded Mr. Hatterly, unabashed.

Miss Billington, *(as before, but conscious of a sudden, hideous chill).* — "Good heavens! the man can't be lying; he 's simply mistaken."

"I see, my dear Mrs. Billington," said Mr. Hatterly, "that I shall have to be perfectly frank with you. Such passages are not often repeated, especially to a parent; but under the circumstances I think you will admit that I have no other guarantee of my good faith to give you. I have no doubt that if you were to ask your daughter at this minute about her feelings, she would think she ought to sacrifice her affection to the duty that she thinks is laid out for her in a distant life. Did I feel that she could ever have any happiness in following that path, believe me, I should be the last to try to win her from it, no matter what might be my own loneliness and misery. But after what she confided to me in that awful hour of peril, where, in the presence of imminent death, it was impossible for her to conceal or repress the deepest feelings of her heart, I should be doing an injustice to her as well as to myself, and even to you, my dear Mrs. Billington — for I know how sincerely you wish her happiness — if I were to let any false delicacy keep me from telling you what she said to me." Jack Hatterly could talk when he got going.

Miss Billington, *(as before, but hot, not cold).*—"Now, I am going to know which one of those girls was talking to him, if I have to stay here all day."

It was with a quavering voice that Mrs. Billington said:

"Under the circumstances, Mr. Hatterly, I think you might tell me all she said — all — all — "

Here Mrs. Billington drew herself up and spoke with a certain dignity. "I should explain to you, Mr. Hatterly, that during the return trip I was not feeling entirely well, myself, and I probably was not as observant as I should have been under other circumstances."

Miss Billington, *(as before, reflectively).*—"Poor Ma! She was so sick that she went to sleep with her head on my feet. I believe it was that Peterson girl who was nearest the port ventilator."

Mr. Hatterly's tone was effusively grateful. "I knew that I could rely upon your clear sense, my dear Mrs. Billington," he said, "as well as upon your kindness of heart. Very well, then; the first thing I knew as I sat there alone, steering, almost blinded by the spray, Carmelita slipped her hand through the ventilator and caught mine in a pressure that went to my heart."

Miss Billington *(as before, but without stopping to reflect).*—"If I find out the girl that did that — "

Mr. Hatterly went on with warm gratitude in his voice: "And let me add, my dear Mrs. Billington, that every single time I luffed, that

dear little hand came out and touched mine, to inspire me with strength and confidence."

MISS BILLINGTON *(as before, with decision)*. —"I'll cut her hand off!"

"And in the lulls of the storm," Mr. Hatterly continued, "she said to me what nothing but the extremity of the occasion would induce me to repeat, my dear Mrs. Billington; 'Jack,' she said, 'I am yours, I am all yours, and yours forever.'"

MISS BILLINGTON *(as before, but more so)*. —"That was n't the Peterson girl. That was Mamie Jackson, for I have known of her saying it twice before."

Mrs. Billington leaned back in her chair, and fanned herself with her handkerchief.

"Oh, Mr. Hatterly!" she cried.

Mr. Hatterly leaned forward and captured one of Mrs. Billington's hands, while she covered her eyes with the other.

"Call me Jack," he said.

"I — I 'm afraid I shall have to," sobbed Mrs. Billington.

MISS BILLINGTON *(as before, grimly)*. — "Mamie Jackson's mother won't; I know *that!*"

"And then," Mr. Hatterly continued, "she said to me, 'Jack, I am glad of this fate. I can speak now as I never could have spoken before.'"

MISS BILLINGTON *(as before, but highly charged with electricity)*. — "Now I want to know what she did say when she spoke."

Mr. Hatterly's clear and fluent voice continued to report the interesting conversation, while Mrs. Billington sobbed softly, and permitted her kind old hand to be fondled.

"'Jack,' she said," Mr. Hatterly went on, "'life might have separated us, but death unites us.'"

Miss Billington *(as before, but with clenched hands and set lips).*—"*That* is neither one of those girls. They have n't got the sand. Whoever it is, that settles it." She flung open the door and swept into the room.

"Jack," she said, "if I did talk any such ridiculous, absurd, contemptible, utterly despicable nonsense, I don't *choose* to have it repeated. Mama, dear, you know we *can* see a great deal of each other if you can only make Papa come and spend the Summer here by the sea, and we go down to Los Brazos for part of the Winter."

* * *

That evening Miss Carmelita Billington asked her Spanish maid if she had dropped the letter addressed to Mr. Hatterly in the letter-box. The Spanish maid went through a pleasing dramatic performance, in which she first assured her mistress that she *had;* then became aware of a sudden doubt; hunted through six or eight pockets which were not in her dress, and then produced the crumpled envelope unopened. She begged ten thousand pardons; she cursed herself and the day she was born, and her incapable memory; and expressed a willingness to drown herself, which might have been more terrifying had she ever before displayed any willingness to enter into intimate relations with water.

Miss Billington treated her with unusual indulgence.

"It 's all right, Concha," she said; "it did n't matter in the least, only Mr. Hatterly told me that he had never received it, and so I thought I 'd ask you."

Then, as the girl was leaving the room, Carmelita called her back, moved by a sudden impulse.

"Oh, Concha!" she said; "you wanted one of those shell breast-pins, did n't you? Here, take this and buy yourself one!" and she held out a dollar-bill.

When she reached her own room, Concha put the dollar-bill in a gayly-painted little box on top of a new five-dollar bill, and hid them both under her prayer-book.

"Women," she said, in her simple Spanish way; "women are pigs. The gentleman, he gives me five dollars, only that I put the letter in my pocket; the lady, she gets the gentleman, and she gives me one dollar, and I hasten out of the room that she shall not take it back. Women — women are pigs!"

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